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**THE  
WHITE BRIGADE**



# THE WHITE BRIGADE

BY ROBERT GOFFIN

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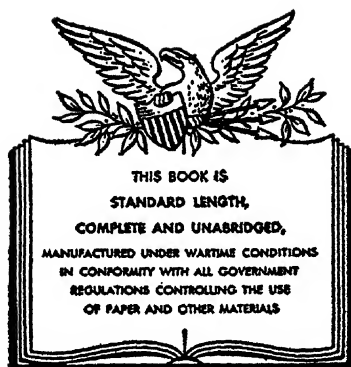
CHARLES LAM MARKMANN



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## INTRODUCTION

BELGIUM is imprisoned under a German jailer for the second time in twenty-five years. I was only fifteen years old when the men in spiked helmets came the first time to burn her cities, murder her people, and enslave her workmen; I stood in line with many others to be examined by a German commission as a beast of burden is appraised by a veterinarian.

Many who stood before and behind me were taken. One died in Germany; another was sent home with tuberculosis; I escaped only because mine were the hands of a student rather than those of a worker.

Now Belgium is once more a prison; all that we know of it is like those messages that prisoners toss from the windows of their cells to be confided to chance. We must try to learn what is happening there by reconstructing the hell that hides behind such words.

When my own village was dying of hunger in 1915, I was regularly distributing clandestine newspapers—*Le Flambeau* (*The Torch*) and *La Libre Belgique* (*Free Belgium*)—sliding them into people's letter boxes. One night in 1918 we stole the supplies of drugs and medicines that the Germans had destined for the front in France. I spent several hours with the son of a miller of Ploncenoit; he had killed a German sergeant and he described to me the deep-lying motives that had strengthened his arm. A few days later he was arrested; then he was shot. I thought, ingenuously enough,

that I had understood the essence of the resistance that an occupied nation could put up. But all that was by comparison a child's game!

This time, driven into exile because I had violently attacked the Germans in September 1939, and had founded the anti-Nazi weekly, *Alerte*, I have followed from day to day the rising tide of the clandestine resistance movements in Belgium. I have tried, out of a mass of facts, some of which I have had to disguise, to re-create the atmosphere in which a people fights for its life in darkness. One thing I know: all the exploits of the Belgians of 1914 that brought them so much glory and honor are as nothing compared to the subterranean blows that are being struck today to overthrow the Teuton overlord.

Yet almost none of this is known to the world at large. Not only has the heroism of 1914 been forgotten; the courage of 1940 is unimagined. I am well aware that the countries occupied by the Germans are so anguished that we are all on the same plane, for martyrdom has become the common denominator of resistance everywhere. Germany has not altered; nor has Belgium. But the voices of the tortured and the slain cannot cross a border, much less an ocean.

Since I came to America I have carefully read all the great newspapers as well as the clandestine publications of my own occupied country. I have checked their accounts against official reports; I have questioned Belgians who have somehow fled the hell of the Gestapo. By dint of document and testimony, all worthy of credence, I have learned the names of men and the places and dates that chart their heroism.

In this book it has been necessary to deprive some of these soldiers of the underground of their individualities, to confuse the personalities of others, or to simplify, in order at once to protect them from the enemy and to make their story more coherent. I have tried to make these fighters live in my book with all the intensity of the tales of heroism and

anguish that have come out of the inferno to the ears of liberty.

In this book, which is faithful to the truth as the light created by a painter is at once artificial yet authentic, I have brought together, co-ordinated, and animated all that I have been able to learn; I have assembled the epic of the underground in such a way as to center the mass of fact on real persons. Dead heroes proudly tell their names beside other, more obscure actors whom I have had to hide, alter, synthesize, depersonalize, destroying the clues that might have betrayed them. Thus it happens that one man may wear, in this story, the laurels that of right belong to his comrade. But I have nowhere departed from the essential reality; on the contrary, I have stayed well within its bounds. The reader who seeks conviction may be assured that all this is but a sketch of which the outlines will be amply filled in once victory has been won.

Let me offer evidence of this accuracy. In describing the tortures of the prison of Breendonck I relied on documents in which I had complete confidence, documents that came from impeccable sources. I see today that my picture is too soft: the accounts that Father Jousse gave to the American press bear sufficient witness to the fact that the imagination of the writer can never match the sadistic ingenuity of the torturer.

I have met many Belgians who escaped from the Gestapo. I have spent many hours in questioning them. To one of them I spoke of my desire to pay my written homage to those humble toilers in the shadow who live to die and have the courage to die that we may live. One evening, when twilight reddened the banks of the Hudson, he told me tersely of things so horrible that they seemed subhuman. I remember how he sat with memory and sorrow, probably thinking of the wife and children that he had left behind. He smiled sadly and murmured:



"What you will write is nothing! The things that we think of as so remarkable, so frightful, are a mere swell in the sea of the underground."

At one time I had thought of presenting each chapter of this book as a separate entity. But I believe that this would be a distortion of the central unity of Belgian resistance; it would result in a mere caricature. It would give a false picture of the hell in which these men, chosen of fate, are bound to their anonymous leaders and to death as the moth is invisibly bound to the light. It is this light of death that I have endeavored to re-create in my book.

My whole task would have been impossible without the wonderful aid that has been so freely given by the Belgian Information Center in New York and its commissioner, M. Jan-Albert Goris, and that has enabled me to authenticate all that I have presented. I must also thank those magazines—*News from Belgium*, *La Belgique indépendante*, *Belgium*, *Belgica*, *Message*, *Marine*—that, in our common exile, have enabled me to treat of facts and men that are already a part of our history. I am grateful, too, to those whose eloquent firsthand accounts have given me a picture of that terrible drama that leaves truth to the good faith of the writer.

I have tried to be no more than a faithful narrator, to whom a few words have come on a partly burned letter from prison. The whole must be rebuilt; the missing words must be sought. These words have become a book in which one hears the echo of those heirs of Philippe Baucq, the murdered Belgian hero who wrote on the walls of his cell:

"My duty constrains me to show the enemy how bravely Belgians can face death."

I have approached my task only with the reverence of those who bow before men who belong to eternity because they put their country's life above their own.

# I

IT HAD HAPPENED like a storm whose force one does not understand until one sees the broken trees. In eighteen days Belgium had been overthrown, destroyed, and bled white. None of those old ideas of freedom that had been the country's greatness remained when Jean Buchet returned to pick up the fragments of his life.

The country was occupied by the same enemy who had tortured it in 1914. Buchet remembered with anguish those years of desolation as he followed the laborious stages of this terrible return. He had served in the air force, so weak against the overwhelming power and numbers of the German planes. With Jean Offenbergh he had fought above Limbourg, but soon the tide of defeat had thrown them up into France and then washed them on to Africa.

In a stolen plane they had flown to Algiers and then to Casablanca, with a few other members of their squadron. In Casablanca, chance had broken the group into two parts: some, like Offenbergh, had succeeded in escaping to England to carry on the fight. But Buchet and the others had been seized by the French police, who offered them the sorry choice of prison or a return to what had been their homes.

Buchet had taken the second alternative. He was put on a French ship to be carried to Marseilles, whence he had to make his own way back to Brussels. He had little money; most of his journey through France was made on foot or, rarely, in the car of some returning refugee who was going

back to his home in the north. Everywhere the Germans were drunk with their own arrogance, defiling a second time the towns where the wounds of 1914 mingled with those of 1940. Buchet bowed his head when he passed the site of a village destroyed in 1915, where only a cemetery remained, with the inscription: "This was Norois."

Buchet re-entered Belgium at Tournai, where the cathedral stood lonely and naked above the rubble, where the air still stank of death and destruction. In the middle of what had been a square, German soldiers were taking pictures of their handiwork. Buchet went on through Mons, gaping with artillery wounds; Nivelles, whose lovely cathedral lay crumbled.

In Nivelles his hosts of the moment stopped to eat; Buchet had no appetite. He walked aimlessly through the town. There were few other strollers; all of them bore a look of suffering. One man in particular, who seemed nearly sixty years old, caught Buchet's eye, and the flier stopped to talk to him. Both had been in France; the older man had tried to embark for England. "But they said I was too old," he sighed. "I went all through the other business as an officer. I want to go through with this one. . . . But there will be plenty of work to be done in Belgium, plenty of work."

They exchanged names and addresses. The older man said he was Georges Deckers, a reserve officer who lived in Brussels.

When Buchet arrived in the capital he hung his head. Drunken Boches swaggered in all the streets. Buchet left the car that had brought him and walked, huddling close to the shattered shopwindows and the empty shelves behind them. The wind was autumnal; he shivered. Turning into his own street, Rue Sans-Souci, he saw that the butcher and the grocer were no longer there.

At his own door he dared not knock, for there might be no answer. He stood afraid a moment even to open the door. Then he forced himself to make the effort.

The sound of the door opening and of footsteps in the house roused his family. His wife appeared in the hall and stood immobile, unbelieving; but two-year-old Anne ran up to be kissed as if he were just coming home from the office, as if the world were still whole. Buchet picked up the child and carried her to where his wife stood unspeaking but with eyes that were sufficient message for him. With one arm he embraced her, the other still holding the little girl, who was afraid when she felt her hands grow hot and wet with the tears of her parents, when she heard no reassuring voice.

At last Buchet and his wife stood apart again; he set the child down gently on the floor. "I've been so afraid, Jean!" his wife sobbed. "I've been so afraid. Have you nothing to say to me?"

"Yes, my dear." He took her hand. "Only this: you must be stronger, harder than ever. The war is just beginning."

Jean Buchet had no choice: there was no denial of the abominable facts that thrust themselves on his attention from all sides. The abstract concept that once again German savagery had smashed the civilization of Europe was made concrete.

The immediate effect on Buchet was simply numbness, a moral nullity in which he was convinced that the world had entered irrevocably a new Dark Age founded on barbarism and injustice. After all, the best-informed men in Europe, the Continent's finest military experts were still predicting England's fall within weeks. And one had to go on living—to live one had to adapt oneself, though one still need not go over to the enemy as some of the less scrupulous had already done.

Buchet kept to his house for days; there was no more

office for him to go to in any case—the firm was gone. An occasional squadron comrade came to see him, but these visits were always uncomfortable and hence brief. Neither host nor guest had words for the other. One such visitor reported having heard deviously that Lieutenant Offenberg and a companion, Reval, had at last reached England and were flying with the RAF. When the guest had gone Buchet shut himself away from his family, sick at heart. Perhaps if he had not left the café in Casablanca . . .

Some ten days after his return home he received a post card from a friend, Paul Freeman, who lived in a Walloon village on the other side of the Soignes Forest, some twenty kilometers from Brussels. Freeman suggested that Buchet pay him a visit as soon as he had received the card and added that he had been in France but had decided to come home.

Buchet told his wife that he would probably be away overnight and went to his bank to withdraw more of his diminishing savings—one could not go always with empty pockets. Then he set out on foot for his friend's home.

The woods had never seemed so mournful—it was more than the dreariness of autumn that filled them—as he crossed the fields beyond which they lay. German officers were drilling their men, shouting harsh orders in their clumsy, ugly language. At another point fifes were shrilling a cruel glee. When Buchet came to a crossroads where a sentry's boots plunged rhythmically into the damp ground he glanced round surreptitiously; across a hedge he could just see fighter planes ranked under a mass of cleverly disposed greenery.

So the walk went; everywhere were inescapable reminders of defeat and degradation. The last half of the journey was completed in a kind of trance in which he did not dare to let his mind function or his eyes observe.

When Buchet turned at last into the lane where his friend lived it was late in the afternoon. He saw Freeman sitting

outside his cottage, watching the flight of starlings among the trees. He called, and Freeman ran to meet him and grasp both his hands, to lead him to the bench beside the house. Neither spoke until Buchet, carefully filling his pipe with vile tobacco, asked dully:

"Why did you come back? You must have known we were well screwed."

"Until the last battle's fought and won, we're not," Freeman replied sharply.

"What do you mean?"

"Just this: England'll hold out and America will get in it—you'll see. Lost causes have been redeemed before this by lives, Jean. I asked you to come because I think I'm going to need you. I want to be sure I can depend on you. Friends have got to stick together more than ever now."

"You know I'm a good friend."

Freeman looked steadily at him. "Listen. I have a job to do here. I want to organize a real resistance, give it a head and arms and guidance. But I can't use anyone I can't be absolutely sure of."

The air had grown cool with the twilight; they went indoors to sit by the fire. Buchet pondered what his friend had said.

"Paul," he remarked at last, wonderingly, fearfully, "you're making me hope again! But it's so utterly impossible! I can't help feeling we're all slaves who'll never know freedom again. What can we do?"

"That will have to wait until later. Right now the main thing is to immerse oneself in the German trough."

Involuntarily Buchet stiffened. "I'm still a Belgian, Paul!"

"I know," his friend replied calmly. "What's happening now is just the logical sequel to what was begun in 1914 and what we virtually forgave."

"We forgave? Belgium has a good memory; the rest of the

world preached at us for twenty years about the 'moral necessity' to forgive and forget."

"We were all fools," Freeman conceded. "We won the war and lost the peace. None of us had any right to be charitable when these bastards were carefully plotting to finish the job they'd begun in 1914. To think that they're sucking Belgium's blood again, the second time in twenty-five years! In Dobbermann's house, right across the street, we have a new neighbor now: Dr. Bratt. If you could see that arrogant shiny-domed Bratt, you'd realize soon enough that they haven't changed a bit; they're the same swine as always." Freeman rose and walked to the window. "Come over here and take a look."

Buchet joined him. In the opposite house Dr. Bratt, in a party uniform, sprawled over two chairs while a thick-featured orderly poured a drink. "He looks quite happy," Buchet sneered.

"Why shouldn't he? Dobbermann was kicked out of the house, and the cellar's full of fine burgundy; you should see the parties they have there every night. Army cars bring their German whores from Brussels, and they don't leave till nearly morning, after all the drunks have roared out their 'Horst Wessel' song. Just 1914 over again," he concluded, leading Buchet back toward a bookcase, from which he took a blue-bound volume. "Remember Brand Whitlock's book?"

"No," Buchet replied; "I never read it, but I've read others like it."

"Well, he was an unbiased witness. What does he say? Two hundred and ten people killed in Louvain, thousands tortured in prisons, hundreds of houses destroyed; in Aerschot, the same thing; in Wavre, ditto; and in Ottignies. Look at what happened in Dinant; Whitlock enumerates the executions and imprisonments and then this:

"When the Germans were repairing a bridge over the Meuse they were under fire from the French on the other

side," he summarized, reading rapidly. "So they rounded up about a hundred people at random and used them as a protective screen, sending one of them in a boat under a flag of truce to tell the French that if they didn't cease fire, all those Belgians would be killed. After the Belgian emissary returned a few more shots were fired. So the Germans herded the whole crowd together—old men and young, women and children (including a dozen under six and some who couldn't walk)—called a firing squad, and methodically disposed of them. Unfortunately not all of them died. The survivors were pulled out of the corpse pile and made to dig graves for the others and throw them in."

Buchet had let his pipe go out; he relit it with trembling fingers.

"And you'll see the same thing today," Freeman went on. "Cruelty and savagery aren't Nazi inventions. They're 'made in Germany.' Remember Governor General von der Goltz' warning in 1915: 'Penalties for hostile acts must strike the innocent and the guilty alike?'"

Buchet strode nervously back and forth in the room. Memory of the past and fear of the future united in him to produce a raging hatred. But he was not a man alone in the world. As if divining his thoughts, Freeman said more quietly:

"I don't ask you to make up your mind now. Think about it. I know you have a wife and child and you have to think of them. But anyway see Valentin."

"Valentin who?"

"Just Valentin: that's all you have to know. Be at the Café Métropole Wednesday at four. He'll know you."

"But why don't you tell me who he is?" Buchet insisted. "Don't you trust me?"

"No!" Yet there was no rancor in Freeman's voice; it was cold and objective.

Buchet half turned, and Freeman sensed rather than saw



the anger in his face. "Listen, Jean," he said rapidly, "I wouldn't have asked you to come if I didn't trust you as much as I trust myself. It's terrible to say, perhaps, but for the kind of work that lies ahead for us no one has a right to trust even himself too far."

"What do you mean?" Buchet asked coldly.

"Let me explain. The Gestapo summoned me last month. I spent a whole day waiting to be questioned in a building on the Avenue Louise, opposite Avenue Demot. In the next room I could hear a Belgian being questioned—and tortured. He wouldn't talk at all at first. Then I began to hear cries of pain and shouts of pleasure. I could clearly hear a whip cracking over the poor devil. This went on for hours, until he was shrieking without a letup. Then suddenly there wasn't a sound, and I realized what had happened."

"What?"

"He gave in. And I couldn't blame him. All the time they were beating him I could hardly keep from shouting to him to give in. A man isn't a man any more under those circumstances! He can't hold out forever, and when he does give in he has to give his friends' names, and it's the same thing for them. So you see we can't even trust ourselves, let alone others."

"I'm sorry," Buchet said contritely. "I understand. I'll see Valentin Wednesday. But now I'd better be leaving."

"Good man. Try to come again next Sunday."

Buchet started to walk back home in the darkness. Only Germans were abroad, it seemed. At the Groenendael bridge a convoy had stopped and Buchet could see the guns mounted on the trucks. He walked on faster, but before he reached Boitsfort he heard sirens far away: there must be a raid on Brussels. At the same time he saw dozens of searchlights stabbing into the mist and clouds. Buchet slipped into a thicket when he heard the whistles and footsteps of German soldiers.

The play of the searchlights was like a geometrical drama on the fogged screen of the sky. The beams swung madly back and forth, crossing and recrossing. Apparently the attackers were heading for the Evere airdrome east of the city. The unmistakable music of English motors was clear in the air, almost blotting out the less smooth noise of the German fighters. Buchet, in his thicket, was living every moment of the raid; his heart was sick, like that of a barnyard duck when its wild brothers sweep by overhead. He could not help wondering whether Offenbergs and Revals were up there.

As he watched a British plane dodge in and out of the web of light to the accompaniment of the staccato of anti-aircraft, he trembled, with fear for the flier and hope for the future. Freeman was right; the war was not over. The Germans had not yet fastened on Europe for good, not while there were men anywhere in the world who were willing to fight on.

There was silence and darkness again; then the all-clear sounded and he went on. As Buchet made his way back to the road he bumped hard against a large mass. It was a car that had stopped there while the raid was on. Cautiously he made his way around it and saw that it was empty: perhaps the driver had fled into the woods; he would be returning now. Buchet stood still, but there was not a sound or a movement. He looked at the car again: it was a German army vehicle.

Buchet's heart beat so fast that he could barely breathe as he knelt beside the road and scooped up a handful of sand. A train whistled somewhere and he dropped the sand. Carefully he bent down again to scoop up another handful, and then he moved silently toward the automobile. Once again he looked around fearfully; then, with his left hand, he opened the hood and felt for the oil-filler cap. A palsy seemed to prevent him from turning and lifting the cap, but after

what seemed an interminable time he mastered it, lifted the cap, and painstakingly poured every grain of the sand in his right hand into the long spout. Then hastily he scooped up a double handful of sand and threw it into the spout. Silently he replaced the cap and closed the hood.

He brushed his hands together to remove the dirt and broke into a run.

## II

JEAN BUCHET had a fitful sleep that night, interlaced with dreams of firing squads. The next day he avoided his wife's eyes as much as possible, for he was sure she could read not only his thoughts but his actions in his face. He dared not tell her anything.

On Wednesday, as directed by Freeman, he went to the Café Métropole a little before four o'clock and sat down with a glass of flat beer. The café was crowded with German travelers and soldiers and whores from Berlin and Hamburg. Scattered among them were a few Belgians, most of them, like Buchet, seated alone and silent. He wanted to close his eyes, to shut out the sight of Belgian Rexist, in party uniform, drinking at the bar with German soldiers.

But somewhere in this crowd was a man who, like himself, had a secret. Freeman had told him: "Night has fallen on Europe; we must fight in the dark." Suddenly the battle of the shadows was clear to him—a frightful game that it was his duty to play but where the stake was his life.

Someone touched his shoulder and he leaped to his feet. He strove to master his face and to look at the stranger, a tall, blond young man who wore a Rexist emblem in his lapel. For a moment Buchet was limp: he had been betrayed.

"I've met you before, haven't I?" the blond man said. "Aren't you a friend of Paul's?"

"Yes," Buchet answered, barely audibly.

"So am I," the stranger said in an ingratiating voice. "Let's sit down."

Buchet studied the blond man's face. It was smooth and extraordinarily gay, with the eyes of a child. "I'm Valentin," he said.

"My name's Jean."

"We have plenty of Jeans already; you'll be Jean Souci." Buchet nodded, and Valentin went on: "There's good news." He turned to call for a glass of beer and, when it had arrived, bent over it to speak more softly.

"The Fritzes tried to invade England—and failed. Some of them have learned a few things. It isn't generally known, but it's damned important and damned hopeful. . . . See that fat slob there, two tables to the left? Watch him; he's Gestapo. You live in the Rue Sans-Souci, don't you?"

"Yes."

"So does he, near you, I think; close to the school. He's one reason I wanted to see you. We want a little information about him: the hours he keeps, where he goes, who comes to see him."

"Right."

"You see"—Valentin smiled—"I'm not asking you for any heroics—yet. Just a small patriotic task."

"That's all right, but how am I to get in touch with you?" Buchet inquired.

"We want the news soon—but let it go till Sunday and tell Paul whatever you've found out by then."

"Is that all?"

"For the moment."

"But you said you had good news?"

"Yes. We've done a good job already. Remember the English raid—not the last one, an earlier one—when anti-aircraft

shells fell in the city? The papers that had sold out to the Boches said they were English bombs. We started right away to spread the truth and it's been splendid. The only sad part is that twenty Belgians have been jailed for saying it was the—you know—that killed Belgians in that raid. Resistance is beginning, you see; it's catching hold."

"Is that your good news?" Buchet had expected something more spectacular.

"Not all of it. Did you read about the fire in the tannic-acid plant at Vilvorde last week?"

"Yes, I saw it in the papers. But what of it?"

"You know who started the fire? We did. You see, early in September," Valentin explained, "we learned that every port on the Channel was choked with boats of every description, even concrete barges with tank ramps. We didn't waste any time. The English bombed hell out of the whole coast of France and Belgium a few hours later. Then the Huns prohibited anyone from entering or leaving the coastal area. For several days we had no idea what was going on.

"But then we found out, when the hospitals began to fill up with men with frightful burns. The Germans had tried their invasion. Every drugstore was cleaned out, and then they requisitioned tannic acid. But we'd been tipped off, and before the requisition order was out there was that most fortunate fire in Vilvorde."

They finished their drinks and walked out, passing the fat Gestapo man. The Boulevard Adolphe Max was thronged with German soldiers looking for women and German street-walkers looking for business. An emaciated little boy was peddling the *Bruesseler Zeitung*. Buchet felt almost suffocated by the air of Germanism that hung over everything, by that stench that had not been smelled in Belgium since 1918.

He said good-by to Valentin at the corner of the Rue Sans-Souci, under the nose of a giant German sergeant.

Buchet felt a tremendous physical disgust that added to his desire to continue to fight. But he forced himself to appear calm as he approached his house and when, at the dinner table, his wife questioned him on his afternoon away from home, so contrary to his custom, he replied, "I've been out looking for a job, Denise. We haven't much money left, you know."

The same explanation enabled him to spend the next three days out of the house, fulfilling the task assigned to him by Valentin. On Sunday he told Denise that he was going to see an old friend who might be able to help him find employment, and then set out for Freeman's village.

He found his friend outdoors. When they had greeted each other they went into the little front room and flanked the window with chairs. "Well?" Freeman demanded.

"Well, I've met your Valentin."

"What do you think of him?"

"Nothing, so far—but he gave me a job."

"Yes, I know," Freeman said, taking out a pipe. "What lousy tobacco there is today—when you can get it. My neighbor smokes chestnut-tree leaves, but they give him headaches. You were saying?"

"I kept an eye on a fat apoplectic that Valentin pointed out to me in the Métropole. His name is Henri Schumacker—born in Luxembourg. He lived in Berlin for a long time and worked for Siemens. I got this by talking to people that I'd seen with him. He lives at 101 Rue Sans-Souci with a woman named Maria Schmidt—the neighbors say they've got a tremendous amount of food and wine."

Buchet abruptly changed the subject: "Are there many of you?"

"Many of whom?"

"Underground people—like yourself."

"You mean the White Brigade?" Freeman said. "I don't know, but I think several hundred. You know why we call it

that, don't you? The Germans formed a Black Brigade, so ours is white because we work against them. Our job is to prepare for an Allied invasion—because I know America will come in—in every possible way: incendiarism, sabotage, espionage, murder, whatever helps. We've got to know every move the Germans make and every move they're going to make. Our whole strength is that we work in the dark without even knowing one another."

"How so?" Buchet asked. "It seems to me that it would be just the opposite."

"We work by threes: each man knows two others, under aliases. Each of these two knows two others, and so on, so that we have a regular pyramid of Belgians of every class."

"But how can you co-ordinate all this activity?"

"There are a few leaders," Freeman explained, "who run the top organization; under them we have sections for each kind of activity; then the thing is redivided by provinces and cities. It's damned complicated."

"Why?"

"Because virtually none of us has any experience in this sort of thing. We had to start from scratch. But really the finest thing of all, Jean, is this: the Germans have wiped out all our old lines for us, and Belgians have lost all the old antagonisms of language and party and religion; everyone has the same enemy now."

### III

THE ultra-secret form of organization sketched by Freeman had soon to be abandoned as the forces of resistance grew in numbers and in scope. Too many of their projects required the co-ordinated efforts of a half-dozen or a dozen persons.

But the elementary caution that Freeman had shown continued: almost all his fellow workers were known to one another only under pseudonyms.

One of their first major tasks was the repatriation of British soldiers who had been unable to reach Dunkerque. Most of these belonged to units that had been in the field near Lessines; isolated in the Flobecq woods, they had been by-passed by the swift tide of the war and now they were marooned behind the enemy lines.

Hiding by day, the Englishmen had spent weary nights in scouting the immediate vicinity of their position. Within a radius of a few kilometers to the north and west there were strong German forces. One of the Englishmen, on a lone patrol, encountered a peasant to whom, in halting French, he explained his comrades' plight. The Belgian was eager to help but fearful of German vengeance; he counseled the Englishman and his friends to remain in the cover of the woods and promised to try to help them.

The next night the same peasant appeared in the woods with a companion. The soldiers feared at first that he had betrayed them, but then they saw that the peasant was carrying great parcels of food. His companion, who spoke some English, introduced himself: he was a town councilor of Ogy, somewhat to the south. The councilor then briefly sketched the German conquests and concluded by saying that the Englishmen had but two choices: to surrender or to hide in the countryside until the opportunity to escape should arise. If they chose the latter, he said, he would procure help for them.

The troops dismissed the first alternative with scorn. The councilor and the peasant worked for many nights thereafter, secreting them, one or two at a time, in near-by villages, disguising them in civilian clothes, and finding forged identity cards for them. For many weeks the soldiers



remained in hiding while, by devious means, news of their plight was brought to the White Brigade in Brussels.

Freeman came one day to the capital and went to Buchet's house. He proposed that they bring all the Englishmen to Brussels, where they would be far safer in the anonymity of a large city, and then arrange to send them back to England. More tedious weeks passed until this could be accomplished, for the men had to travel only at night, and then never in any number lest the suspicion of German sentries be aroused. Each man or pair of men was accompanied by a Belgian who knew the route and who could answer any questions that might be put.

One of the most useful men of the White Brigade at this time was Edgard Lefèvre, who had served many years on British merchantmen and was now employed in a Brussels bank. Lefèvre, in addition to serving as interpreter and liaison agent, played a large part in organizing the various removals, and when the Englishmen were all in Brussels he tried to teach them enough simple French to enable them to avoid arrest once they had started homeward. All this continued to be done at night; the fugitives dared not appear on the streets lest they be required, like all able-bodied men, to show the special labor card with the monthly stamp of the Meldeamt, the German office to which everyone had to report each month.

Meanwhile other members of the Brigade were organizing relays—not unlike the Underground Railway that helped fleeing slaves in the United States before the Civil War—that would conduct the Englishmen to various coastal points where they could embark for England. Some of these were Belgian and French fishing towns, where fishermen could be found who would conceal a man or two in their boats and run the risk of making for England; others were as far away as Portugal, requiring a long secret journey across France and Spain.

"But isn't it unnecessarily difficult," Buchet asked Freeman one day, "to make these poor devils come so far inland and then send them back to the coast?"

"It does waste time," Freeman conceded, "but it's infinitely safer. The English would never be able to make contact with our fellows in the country or on the coast. And in the meantime they'd run the constant risk of arrest in those districts—you know how much attention a stranger would attract, let alone a foreigner. When they go back to the coast our fellows go along to guide them and make contacts. Then they'll wait at the ports—at the Belgian ports, anyway—until the boats come back."

"What for?" Buchet interposed. "They'll be strangers too; they'll attract plenty of unwelcome attention."

"But they at least speak the language. No, there are two reasons for their waiting there: the first is to learn whether the trip was successful; the second is to bring back guns and ammunition that the fishermen get from England—they hide the stuff under the fish, the same as they do the Englishmen on the trip out. We can get plenty of arms that way and we can't rely on being able to steal enough from the Boches."

The first groups of these Englishmen had barely been started on their way back when an underground group in the province of Limbourg, on the Dutch border, sent word that other British soldiers were still in hiding there. A visit by men of the White Brigade's Brussels group was demanded at once to arrange for the repatriation of these men. Freeman and Buchet went to Liège, while Valentin was sent to Antwerp.

Emile-Auguste Fraipont, a metallurgist who lived in Liège with his wife and daughter, was a man of seventy who had retired before the invasion of 1940. In 1914 he had lost his son at the front, and through the years the couple had lavished on their daughter Constance a double affection reinforced by a continuing hatred of Germany. When they

saw their country a second time under German domination the old couple forgot their years in their desire to hasten the liberation of their country. They soon found where they could be of most service and were ready helpers in the passage of the isolated Englishmen. When in the fall and winter of 1940 and 1941 they saw how Britain stood firm under the German aerial scourge, they were sure that they were not laboring in vain.

One April dawn the sirens howled in Liège, and German fighters roared into the air. But the British had already dropped their bombs and turned away. The Germans engaged them north of the city, between the Meuse and the Albert Canal; two fighters were shot down in flames. The bombers resumed their journey to England, but above Visé they were attacked again. This time the Germans were more successful; a great plane turned crazily in the air and began to fall. At the same moment a pin point seemed to break off the machine; then a white parachute blossomed in the air.

German army cars and motorcycles fanned out over the whole region. Some headed directly for the flames that rose from the fallen plane, but its four occupants were dead. These vehicles then joined the hunt for the parachutist. Dogs were called out; they found his trail but lost it again in a brook.

The neighboring villages were systematically combed, but without result. The aviator had apparently melted into the countryside as invisibly as a lump of sugar into a cup of coffee.

Actually, he had landed in a little clump of bushes where a gamekeeper was working. The gamekeeper hurried him to a huge oak tree in the branches of which huntsmen had built a covered lookout platform, gave him his own bread and bottle of coffee, and instructed him, by signs, not to move.

The gamekeeper held up two fingers to indicate that it might be two days before he returned.

Barely had he resumed his work when a German patrol accosted him and demanded to know whether he had seen an English airman. The gamekeeper said that he had not, but he offered to help the Germans look for him. From his post in the tree the Englishman could see the Belgian carefully guiding the Germans away from him.

When the day's work was done the gamekeeper informed his employer of what had happened. The latter, a landowner, was put in contact with Freeman, who insisted that they must proceed cautiously. He asked the landowner for the name of a trustworthy person in the neighborhood and was told to seek out Arthur Coene, a notary in Liège. After exhaustive investigation of Coene, Freeman and Buchet went to his office to demand his help in finding a safe shelter for the Englishman. Coene sent them to a couple named Meltior, who pledged aid.

Meltior sent his wife to the Fraipont home to enlist that family, who promised to house the flier. Buchet and Freeman then went to Maeseyck and accompanied the gamekeeper to the shelter in the oak tree. Freeman assured the airman in English that they would arrange for his safety; meanwhile he must wait.

Returning to Liège, they bought a copy of *La Légia*, the German-suborned paper, which carried a lengthy denunciation of the British raid on Liège, in which three factory workmen had been killed. The article announced that a public funeral would be held to demonstrate the people's solidarity against the savage attacker. It concluded with a mention of the one flier's escape and threats of serious penalties for any who gave him aid.

The next evening they went back to the gamekeeper's lodge to discuss the best means of smuggling the airman to

Liège. German patrols had augmented their activity and let no one pass without showing his identity card. Buchet proposed that the Englishman use his card, but the idea was abandoned because it bore a Brabant stamp: the bearer might be questioned and the Englishman, of course, knew neither Flemish nor French.

The gamekeeper ventured a suggestion. The Oberfeldkommandatur of Liège had ordered the surrender of all abandoned military weapons and private arms. Only a few days before, the gamekeeper had found a Belgian machine gun in a field. He needed only to get a permit to allow "bearer" to turn it in at Liège.

Buchet and Freeman stayed the night at the lodge; the next morning the gamekeeper went to the town hall and received from the German functionary there a "passierschein" for the transport and delivery of one machine gun. It was made out in the gamekeeper's name, and a few hours later Buchet, Freeman, and the Englishman, in the gamekeeper's uniform, took the train for Liège.

They reached the city without incident and left the machine gun, carefully wrapped, in the checkroom, where the gamekeeper was to get it the following day to make the formal delivery to the Oberfeldkommandatur and complete the masquerade that was to save an English aviator. The flier himself was taken to the Fraiponts', where he was received like a son.

The Fraiponts forbade him to leave the house during the day; only in the evening could he take a little walk with M. Fraipont as guide and safe-conduct. Fraipont knew enough English to tell the aviator of the two funerals that had followed his raid.

The Germans had utterly failed to create an anti-British manifestation at the burial of the three workmen killed by a bomb. Despite the large crowd that accompanied the bodies to the cemetery, there was no demonstration except

to prevent a German journalist from pronouncing a funeral oration. A Belgian priest had spoken briefly, recalling a cardinal's allusion to those who had died for their country. The crowd understood and filed solemnly past the coffins covered with flowers. Every wreath bore the same inscription: "In memory of three Belgians who have fallen in a righteous struggle."

The same afternoon the four dead Englishmen had been buried. The press had announced that they would receive military honors but that they would be followed to the grave by the contempt and the hatred of the Belgian people. When the bodies were taken to the cemetery another great crowd followed; it was not hindered by the Germans because, no doubt, they expected the demonstration that had failed to materialize at the earlier funeral.

At the cemetery, however, the funeral party found its road flanked by long lines of kneeling Belgians. The lines stretched to the freshly dug graves; there, as in a place of honor, knelt the three workmen's widows.

Meanwhile the Fraiponts did what they could to cheer the Englishman. Their daughter Constance gave him French lessons every day, for he would need the language if he were to regain England. Occasionally the Meltiors came to visit him. Often they carried a Germanized newspaper that told of the havoc wreaked on Britain by the German bombers and they asked the flier how much truth there was in the predictions of Britain's quick surrender.

"As long as there's an Englishman left," he would reply in his fragmentary French, "the war will go on!" Then he would tell them what he had seen of his countrymen's heroism.

After several weeks Buchet returned to Liège. The various stages of the Englishman's voyage had been prepared; he was to leave with a young Belgian aviator who hoped to join the Royal Air Force. There was a brief moment of sorrow when

the Englishman made his farewells to his hosts. He had become a part of the family; one by one they kissed his cheeks. He thanked them awkwardly; turning to go, he saw above the fireplace his own photograph beside that of their dead son.

Buchet accompanied the Englishman to Namur, traveling by a Meuse river boat to avoid German patrols. At the end of their journey they went to a little hotel near the railroad station to meet the Belgian flier who was to be the Englishman's companion for the rest of the journey. This flier would not be his only fellow traveler, however; a third man was to join them in Dinant. Buchet, meanwhile, returned to Brussels from Namur.

Days of anxious thought followed in Liège and Brussels as the Englishman's friends wondered about the progress of his journey. One day the Fraiponts received a post card bearing an apparently casual message and initialed signature. But the Fraiponts knew that it meant that all was going well; their joy was such that they had to share it with their friends, the Meltiors.

Shortly afterward the Meltiors were visiting friends. The talk turned to England's resistance. As the discussion grew more heated, Mme. Meltior insisted that she was far better informed on the subject than any of the others. They demanded to know why she made such a preposterous claim.

"Because an Englishman told me all about it!" she cried. When she saw the smiles of disbelief she was wounded; she wanted only to establish her credibility. "It was the Fraiponts and we," she added unthinkingly, "that saved him after the bomber crashed between Visé and Maeseyck, and he told us all about his country."

Such a story, though Mme. Meltior's belated prudence prevented her from saying more, was not long in spreading. Both the Meltiors and the Fraiponts were constantly being congratulated by friends and strangers, for their act seemed

to symbolize the city's determination to resist the Germans, to contribute to their defeat.

Buchet learned in July that the Englishman and his companions had at last arrived in Lisbon, where they were safe. Here was tangible evidence that the White Brigade and its prototypes had mastered vital problems in the establishment of their secret confederations. Since he had more work to do in Liège, Buchet decided to transmit this latest news to the Fraiponts. But when, arrived in the city, he rang at their door, no one answered. Then he knocked at the door, but with no better result.

A woman about to turn in at the next house walked over to him. "What do you want?" she asked him almost hostilely.

"I want to see Monsieur Fraipont."

"What for?" the woman persisted.

Buchet began to be apprehensive. "I'm a friend of his," he explained.

"You're not from around here," the woman replied; "you don't have the Liège accent. I don't know who you are—you might be a German, for all I know. . . . I guess that doesn't make any difference, though. The whole Fraipont family was arrested by the Boches last week."

Buchet immediately demanded more details, but the woman refused to tell him anything further. It was only late in the afternoon, after discreet and sometimes difficult questioning of several friends of the Fraiponts, that he learned that both they and the Meltiors had been seized without warning; that, despite beatings and hunger and nights without sleep, every one of the five had told a different story. But they were not hardened liars; at last they contradicted themselves, unwittingly corroborated one another on a detail, and the Germans learned the truth.

But not all the truth could be told. Neither the Meltiors nor the Fraiponts could identify the persons who had brought the English airman to Liège and later helped him to



leave: they did not know the names of either Freeman or Buchet; they had merely heard the younger of the men addressed as M. Souci. The disclosure led to some unhappiness for all the Souci families in the city, but none of them was accused.

The frustration of their search seemed only to increase the anger of the Germans, who decided to make of the five culprits an example that would serve as an unparalleled deterrent. A military court was immediately convened, and a German defender was assigned to the prisoners. The prosecutor was ruthless and the verdict was only a formality. With a pretense of appeal to conscience, the judge offered a commutation of sentence if the Belgians would identify the men who had engineered their crime. They could only repeat what they had already said; the Fraipont family was sentenced to death, the Meltiors to a long term at forced labor. Their German defender presented a petition for clemency; it was refused without delay.

And so one August dawn, in three separate cells of Saint-Léonard Prison, the Fraiponts heard the jailers' last knock at the door. The old man refused the traditional glass of rum; with his wife and daughter he was put into a truck and the three, under a heavy guard, rode into the sunrise.

The truck took them to the same spot where the heroes of 1914 had been executed. Dismounting from the truck, they received the ministrations of a priest. Then the officer in command of the firing squad ordered them blindfolded. The victims were bound and lined up against the wall; they heard the guttural command: "Ready! . . . Aim! . . . Fire!"

Above the rifles' roar a cry rang out; Fraipont and his wife knew that their daughter had fallen. "Ready! . . . Aim! . . . Fire!" And old Fraipont stood alone, awaiting the same three words, the same roar of guns.

"Ready! . . . Aim! . . ." "*Vive la Belgique!*" The guns were not quick enough to stifle that cry.

The German officer awaited the army doctor's cursory examination of the bodies; when the deaths were officially certified he proclaimed ritually, "Justice has been rendered," and turned on his heel.

The Fraiponts were among the first Belgians to be executed under the new occupation. They had been preceded only by a couple named Overmans. These two citizens of Brussels, who also had helped in the escape of the Englishmen trapped in the woods of Flobecq, were shot when the husband was seventy-three years old, the wife sixty-nine, on August 12, 1941.

## IV

A DOZEN MEN sat in a half-lit room. They knew one another by the names of the streets where they lived or where there was a café where they could be found: La Hulpe, Souci, Malibran, Bosquet, Chaudron, Clemenceau, Blaes, L'Anglais, Neufchatel, and others. One street, Defacqz, had already disappeared from their chart: that was Adelin Hartveld, the young lawyer who had left his studies to fight in 1940 and, after the battle, had turned at once to the movement of resistance. He had been particularly useful in smuggling news into and out of the prisons where his fellow patriots were confined and in learning some of the German plans, until in January 1941 he, too, had been sent to join those with whom he had so long communicated, whom he had so long helped.

The fortunate others, those who still sat in this room, represented every stratum: merchants, intellectuals, professional men, workers. When Buchet, whom they knew as Souci, looked round him at these gallant men who had

soberly staked their lives on a cause that weaker men had given up in 1940, he repeated inwardly the sentence that Gabrielle Petit had penciled on the wall of her cell before her execution in 1915: "It is from the plain people that the greatest heroes come."

The men spoke in low, quick tones; time was always precious to them. Their plans were simple enough: for the present, to organize anti-German rallies to counteract the broadcast propaganda of a few hired traitors who shouted, in the name of all Belgium, hatred for England. And there were still Englishmen hidden in Belgium who had to be kept alive and smuggled out.

"One job," Neufchatel said, in the darkness of the room in the Rue du Pepin, "is to gather reliable men in the farming districts. They can assure us a certain amount of food for the English."

"What progress has been made so far?" L'Anglais demanded; his voice rose only slightly over the obligato of fifes and bugles from the Grenadiers' Garrison, occupied now by the Germans.

Reports were made: certain members of the White Brigade had begun organizational work in the rural areas; their recruits had brought in others. To each had been assigned a task as nearly as possible suited to his background.

"How many Englishmen are still here?" Chaudron inquired.

"We haven't any exact figures," L'Anglais replied; "maybe about two hundred. We've sent home many more than that, but it's quite a job. It is going a little better now, though. The main difficulty is sending men all the way across France when they can't speak a word of the language. But now we send a Belgian with each Englishman—a Belgian who fought and wants to join the English army. He has to tell anybody who might ask that the man with him is Flemish."

Some of the men had begun to leave. "Won't you wait

till nine, Blaes?" L'Anglais said. "BBC time, you know."

"I'll listen at home. My wife's waiting for me."

"I'm hungry as hell!" another complained.

"Too bad!" L'Anglais retorted. "Goebbels taught the Boches that privation helps a man think clearly; it ought to work for us too. . . . Sounds like somebody's outside."

He went to the window. "It must be La Hulpe with his new recruit. They'll be up in a minute."

There was the sound of footsteps on the stairs. No one spoke until the two newcomers stood in the shadows of the room, the door closed carefully behind them. "Here is a friend who lives in the Rue des Villas," La Hulpe announced. Buchet recognized the voice of Freeman and tried to distinguish the features of his companion. L'Anglais answered the introduction.

"You all hear that? La Hulpe brought us Souci, you recall. He's ready to be a surety for the loyalty and the patriotism of this new man, whom we'll call simply Villa, like the Mexican. Souci can show him the ropes. . . . Now, Villa, is there some special kind of work you'd prefer to do—sabotage, spying, setting fires, ambushes, stealing explosives, secret papers—what'll it be?"

"In 1914," a strong calm voice replied, clearly enunciating each syllable, "my father smuggled men into Holland. I'd like to do the same kind of thing."

No one moved. An occasional glow lit up a face as someone drew on a reeking cigarette.

"Right," L'Anglais said at last. "But I warn you that the job's a lot harder than it was in the other war. There's more than a border to get by; there's a no-man's-land of two whole countries: Vichy's police are quite as tough as Franco's."

"I am aware of that."

"Good. But remember, Villa, from this moment you belong to the Belgian underground. You must never speak of your work—one word can cost lives. And we silence loose

tongues—permanently. When you join us you give up everything—family, honor, friends, money—they're all secondary. If you think you can't sacrifice everything, including yourself, to this work, you can still withdraw."

There was silence again, but only for a moment. "I'm ready," Villa said. "I know my duties."

L'Anglais turned a flashlight on Villa; Souci saw, as in a vivid halo, a big-boned rugged face beneath curling hair, a tasteful necktie, and an exceptionally well-made overcoat.

"Do you swear," L'Anglais said tensely, still holding the flashlight firm on the blinking eyes, "to submit yourself to the orders of the White Brigade, to obey them without question, to devote all your energies to the liberation of Belgium and the destruction of the Germans, to accept the discipline of the White Brigade, and to pay with your life for any betrayal, voluntary, accidental, or forced?"

Villa raised his right hand. "I swear it," he answered solemnly, and L'Anglais turned off the light. Souci heard the shuffling steps as Freeman and Villa left the room. Then L'Anglais turned on his light again, shielding it with a handkerchief.

"Time for the BBC," he said. "Will you turn on the radio, Chaudron?"

Chaudron switched on the button, and they gathered around the little box, its volume kept barely audible. After a preliminary hum they heard the familiar introduction: "Allo! Allo! This is the BBC in London. Radio Belgium is on the air."

The announcer gave a thorough digest of the day's news from all the world; then he began to discuss the background of the traitors in Belgium who had taken German money. Malibrán listened attentively, making rapid notes for the mimeographed newspaper that he would have to put together later.

There was a click and the dial of the radio went dark. No further sound issued. "Damn, a fuse must have blown out!" Malibran muttered. He twisted the dial, turned the current on and off. Souci, meanwhile, had gone to a window that gave on the street. "This looks a little sour to me," he said. "There are German soldiers at the doorway." He returned to the others. "We're in a trap. How do we get out?"

"Take it easy, Souci." L'Anglais laughed without humor. "Don't lose your head. Anybody who has any papers on him that might cause trouble, swallow them. Malibran, get rid of those notes." L'Anglais himself took a sheet of foolscap from a table and hastily scrawled something on it. "Oh yes, one thing more. Set the dial for the Stuttgart station."

"What for?" Chaudron objected.

"Are you going to do as I tell you?" L'Anglais's voice was harsh; Chaudron obeyed, lighting a match to make sure of the setting. L'Anglais folded the paper so that it could stand on top of the radio; in the light of Chaudron's match Souci read the big red lettering: "We swear our fealty to our chief, Léon Degrelle. Vive Rex!"

Heavy boots were mounting the stairs. Neufchatel lit his pipe, chuckling, and L'Anglais affixed a large Rexist emblem to his lapel. Suddenly the radio dial was bright again and L'Anglais swiftly switched on the lights of the room. The others watched him apprehensively as a German voice began to come out of the box, hailing German successes. Almost at the same moment the boots stopped at their door and a loud knock resounded. Before they could answer it the door opened and two German soldiers entered, revolvers in hand. "Hitler, Germany, and Kommandatur!" they barked.

Through the open door came cries rising from the lower floor, mingled with harsh orders. One of the soldiers approached the radio. "What's going on here? Ach, you listen to a German station. *Wunderbar*."

Then he saw the paper with its red-lettered slogan. He bent over it and slowly read out the French words. "*Ach, Rex. Sind sie Rexisten?*"

"*Natürlich!*" L'Anglais grinned.

"*Aber wir sind Freunden!*" the German said jubilantly. "*Gottfried, sie sind alle Nazi! Heil Hitler!*"

L'Anglais returned the salutation, and the others belatedly imitated him. But Souci's heart seemed to have stopped his lungs; he heard more cries from outside. Not all the men in the room spoke German; not all of them were such good actors as L'Anglais.

But the German soldiers stood at attention, clicked their heels, and with a final "Heil Hitler!" they turned and left. As Souci walked hesitantly to the door to close it he heard the blows and the shouts of the troopers who had surprised Belgians listening to their own radio from London. He closed the door and sat in the nearest chair.

"Tight squeeze," Malibran said at last.

"We've got L'Anglais to thank for it," Chaudron, contrite, chimed in. "How did you know what was coming, L'Anglais?"

L'Anglais wiped the sweat from his forehead. "The bastards. God help the poor devils they caught. But I've heard of that trick of theirs. They come into an apartment house about BBC time and cut off the main electric meter. Radios and lights go off, and naturally everybody thinks there's something wrong with the current and never thinks of changing the radio setting. While everybody's waiting for the current to come back the Germans go through the house and put a guard at each door so that, when the pig in the basement turns on the current again, they can tell who's listening to England."

"Not a bad stunt," Malibran admitted grudgingly. "It's left me a little clammy."

There was a general disposition to leave the place, and L'Anglais did not interfere. "Remember," he said, tacitly authorizing the departure, "next Monday night at six." Everyone murmured assent.

Souci and Malibran went downstairs and out into the dark street together. Traffic was fairly heavy around the Namur Gate; in side streets German soldiers were entering and leaving shabby hotels with run-down women.

"I guess you don't remember me, Souci," Malibran smiled as they walked along.

"Oh yes, I've seen you at meetings before."

"But didn't we meet almost a year ago? Don't you remember that day in Nivelles when we wondered whether the English would hold out? They've done all right!"

"Deckers!" Souci blurted out, recalling in every detail his conversation with the sorrowful officer who had not been allowed to fight again.

"That's right. I told you we'd meet again one day."

One night the whole city of Brussels was awakened by the crash of bombs and the chatter of guns. Buchet and his wife, like thousands of others, stood barefoot at the window to watch the RAF attack. From one window to another rang a single joyous cry: "They're here!" For more than an hour all Brussels was at its windows; in more than one house lights went up deliberately to guide the raiders. When at last the British planes were engulfed in night and distance, Buchet and his wife felt as if a friend had left them.

The next morning Freeman came to Buchet's house. "Good news, Jean," he announced joyfully; "five German planes knocked down last night over Brussels alone—I saw the wreck of one in the Rue van Oost, near the Bears' Cage. And more shot down at Heysel and Melsbroek and Sterrebeek. But that's by the way. I really came to bring you reports to be sent to London. When is Villa leaving?"



"About two this afternoon," Buchet replied, taking the thin papers that Freeman proffered. "Are these safe?"

"As safe as we can expect. The usual ordinary letters with interlineations in invisible ink. How many are going with Villa?"

"About half a dozen Belgians and the same number of English."

"With him that makes thirteen. Not the best omen we could have." Freeman smiled. In the kitchen Mme. Buchet was preparing lunch for her family. "You'll give the reports to Villa before he leaves?"

"Of course."

Freeman refused an invitation to lunch and left. Buchet himself ate hurriedly and shortly after one o'clock he was in the Grande Espinette district. He pushed open the door of a dirty bar where men stood drinking as if unaware of the long leather thongs over their shoulders. Villa was at a table; Buchet sat down with him and, after an exchange of greetings, nodded toward the men at the counter. "Who are they?"

"Poor devils who haul coal wagons here from Charleroi. No horses, no gas for trucks, you know."

"What a job!"

"They make a living. They get good prices for their coal here and buy stuff to take back to the mines."

"I don't envy them. Where are our men?"

"They're them—or some of them are. My crew—English and Belgians alike—are disguised like these work horses. It's the best way of reaching France."

Buchet touched Villa's thigh under the table. "For London," he whispered quickly, and Villa's hand went down to take the papers.

"I've got to start," Villa muttered. He turned to the bar. "All right, loafers, get going!" he cried like a labor-gang

foreman. A dozen of the drinkers swallowed their beer and followed him out.

The German authorities reiterated their warning that any persons found guilty of having aided the Allies would be put to death. Certain traitors were joining the underground movement to work as spies; they were under the direction of one Hendrick, who had worked for the Germans in the other war, and of Freeman's neighbor in La Hulpe, Dr. Bratt.

This latest development was the subject of discussion at a meeting at which Chaudron was late. He came in breathless, as if he had been running, and the talk stopped.

"Villa's been caught!" he announced; then, pressed for details, he added: "He was picked up at the French frontier and sent to the Charleroi prison. I got wind of it today when a stranger came to the house and told me—this fellow had been in Charleroi, but they let him go."

"But what happened?"

"All I know is that Villa was picked up with some English fliers. Somewhere the Germans had found a list with his name on it, and now they're torturing him to learn more. I trust Villa, but it seems that the list was pretty comprehensive, and the Huns have already arrested several others."

"Those must be my men," L'Anglais said ruefully. "We'd worked out a pretty good system for finding and hiding RAF men."

Within the next week Neufchatel was arrested and lodged in de Forest Prison, to which Villa and several others had been transferred. The Gestapo had lost no time in its investigation. Given a single clue, it had been able to make wide discoveries. Meanwhile those who were still free had to take care of the prisoners' families.

At the same time, through released prisoners and suborned prison warders, they were able to keep abreast of their com-

rades' plight. Each day the prisoners were taken in an armored truck to Gestapo headquarters, where they were lined up against the wall. At the slightest sign of communication among them the whisperers' heads were smashed back against the wall.

The questioning itself, in which the prisoners were interviewed singly, was more brutal. Villa, it was said, had defended himself and the rest vigorously; those who had seen him in prison told of the innumerable welts raised on his face by beatings with belts and lanyards.

But soon the Gestapo men saw that Neufchatel, whose good humor had kept the others strong, was the inspiration of the group. He was brought before one Dr. Geutzke, a propaganda director, who practiced all the wiles of generosity on him without success. Neufchatel was then sent to the torturers.

For hours he was kept standing erect before his questioner's desk, kept alive only by the will to resist all the weakness that seemed to engulf him. When the questioner wearied or grew hungry Neufchatel was taken to an empty room and beaten methodically. In a few days the bones of his legs were all but broken; he could barely stand when he was called once more to be questioned.

"Identify Souci," he was ordered. "We've managed to find out that that's the alias of one of the other traitors. He saw Villa in the Espinette before the dog started out."

"Never heard of him!" Neufchatel retorted.

"Ever hear of this? Otto, give the gentleman a talking powder!" A crowbar smashed against his kneecap and a heavy German boot thrust its cleats into Neufchatel's instep. "Now will you talk, you Belgian swine!"

"To hell with Hitler!"

A rifle butt crashed over his face, breaking his front teeth. Neufchatel could not prevent a cry, on which the Germans seized.

"My dear sir," said the questioner, suave again, "you have only to give us this little bit of information and you're a free man. Would you like one of these cigarettes?" He gestured toward a case on his desk. "Just tell me where Souci lives."

"I never heard of Souci."

"Don't be ridiculous! You're the leader of these bandits; Villa's just an underling, and Souci gave you both your orders. You must know him."

"I have no idea what you're talking about."

Neufchatel felt as if he were drowning in his own blood; his knees were shaking, and his feet seemed to be on fire. But he would not talk.

"Very well," the German said sourly. "You're still too pigheaded, but we'll cure you, my friend. I saw your kind at Dachau during my training, but there weren't many who could hold out forever. You simply haven't suffered enough. But you will; you will. Until tomorrow, then."

It was a solace to be thrown back into the packed cell, filled with blood and sobs. Most of the faces were familiar by now, but sometimes there would be a new one. The intimacy of anguish was spontaneous, and the new arrival was at once an old comrade. He would tell the veterans why he was there, and they would discuss their own crimes and sometimes lay plans for new ones against the distant day of freedom. Every night the sound of "God Save the King" was clearly audible from another cell and, when a strange prisoner asked who could be singing the song, he was told: "Just a pious man who says his prayers every night."

There was no heat in the cells in that first dreadful winter of occupation. As in the world outside, the only warmth was the hate of the Germans and the determination to destroy them if it took a lifetime. Meanwhile there was England, the hope of the whole imprisoned country, England that stood alone against the Hun.

One night when it was too cold to sleep, Buchet saw two

German policemen turn in to the Rue Sans-Souci and his shivering increased. But the Germans knocked at the door of his neighbor, Schumacker, and he breathed more freely. Nevertheless, he changed his alias from Souci to Sans.

Throughout the winter the White Brigade tried to obtain counsel for the men in prison. But every name they suggested was refused by the Germans, until a new decree prohibited any possible representation save by one of five lawyers who had gone over to the Germans. In addition, the preliminary investigation, in direct opposition to Belgian law, was secret.

The trial itself began April 7, 1941. Fifteen Belgians stood before a German military court, accused of having sheltered English soldiers from August to December 1940 and helped them and Belgian soldiers to escape to Britain. The prosecutor pronounced an impassioned harangue directed against these propagandists of Anglo-Jewish mysticism. Then the court offered to provide German military counsel.

Villa stood forward from the others. "Gentlemen"—he smiled—"I thank you for your swinish solicitude for our welfare. We did want the help of Belgian lawyers, a right assured by civilized nations. This you refused. How can we trust men whom you provide only because you can rely on their rottenness? For months we have been beaten and tortured by your police. We would expect even worse from your lawyers. We refuse your 'help.' Our consciences are clear; we have nothing to say but the truth!"

The trial was brief enough; it was but a formality. The accused were forbidden to know the evidence against them. Villa insisted on speaking once more in summation.

"The charges are true, gentlemen," he began. "There were Englishmen—our Allies—who could not get to Dunkerque in time. They hid in the woods of Flobecq, and I took a leading part in arranging for their refuge and escape. But I owe all that I am to English education; I should be worse

than a thief if I did not repay my debt. I am not a hero; I am a bank teller. None of these others whom you have indicted with me is guilty. Some may have helped me because I lied to them, but none knew the identity of the men they were asked to help. And it was I who planned the escapes—Neufchatel had nothing to do with any of it; he's simply a young man who wants to go abroad to make his living.

"I have no regrets for what I have done. I would do it again—more carefully. I believe that Belgium and Britain are united in a just war against Germany; I want to stand with those whose hands are clean. *Vive la Belgique! Vive l'Angleterre!*"

His fellows wept with admiration as the court retired to "deliberate." But in a few minutes the judges returned and stood at attention.

"In the name of the Fuehrer and of Greater Germany," the presiding judge declaimed, "this court finds all the accused guilty of the acts charged and sentences them all to death."

## V

THE EXECUTIONS of the fifteen "traitors" were postponed several times. Meanwhile Freeman sent Buchet to Liège to co-ordinate new sections of the White Brigade, to weld them together, and to instruct them in efficient growth and organization, as well as to learn from them whatever techniques they had to offer and their plans for future action.

Buchet traveled by a succession of interurban trams to avoid police attention. When he reached Liège he found the city under a strange aspect. Streets and cafés were full of

German soldiers; in doorways ragged children held out almost transparent hands to beg a few sous for food. Buchet thought of his own daughter in Brussels. He walked boldly into a café that was particularly popular with the Boches and, by arrangement, met there a saboteur who was to give him lodging for the night.

Early the next morning the meeting was convened in the home of a court clerk. The chairman was Arthur Coene, a notary from the suburb of Tilleur, who introduced the other delegates: Guillaume Hocke, quartermaster of the Liège police; Jules van de Walle of Hoboken, Richard Soupard of Mons, Constant de Greef of Ghent, Robert Lelong of Hainaut, one Borman from the coastal area, Maurice Casteels, and Jules Lienaerts.

Their talk was long and often confused. The chief problem before them was to unify all the spontaneous movements of resistance into a great pyramid with a base of thousands of men and women. The relationships of the various groups had to be determined, as well as the execution of orders, the machinery to cope with emergencies, and the organization of planned acts of violence.

Belgian traitors were classified together with the Germans and were marked for the same treatment. "There are a few dozen of them," Coene said, "who thought they were smart to run into the Germans' camp after the armistice. But since one or two of Hitler's promises haven't come through, they're no longer 'defending' the Germans; they're just trying to save their own skins. They know they're sunk if the Germans lose; that's why they work so hard to make the rest of us follow them."

At lunch time the men went to various restaurants, eating alone or in pairs to avoid notice, and then returned to their meeting. They all knew that in their ranks were Gestapo operatives, though they could not yet identify them, for the Germans were never slow in tracking down one section

or another of the White Brigade. It was decided, therefore, that meeting places and passwords would be changed every two weeks and sooner if any group was captured. It was the only way to throw the Germans off the track.

The final problem was that of violence. Each group had its own ideas, and the leaders recognized that this problem depended largely on local conditions for its solution. Therefore, a secret commission would be formed for each precinct of the large cities, charged with the preparation of sabotage, arson, and, when necessary, murder in its own area. Arson was one of the most efficacious and at the same time one of the safest tools for crippling the German war machine. Hitherto it had been largely a matter of individual initiative.

Soupart read aloud from a file of clippings taken out of German-directed papers. On March 6 there had been large fires in an oil refinery in the port section of Antwerp and in a rubber factory in the suburbs. On March 7 various factories in Tubize and the province of Sambre-et-Meuse had been destroyed. In May the same thing had happened in Namur; in June, Bressoux and Liège; in July, in Charleroi and Ghent; in August, in the Campine and Marcinelle. This weapon was too valuable to be ignored.

Buchet suggested that the various groups of the White Brigade survey minutely the factories, mines, quarries, railroads, powerhouses, steel mills, chemical plants, and communications centers in their respective areas, then form groups who were to be sedulously schooled in the best techniques of sabotage applicable to each type of industry. These men would have to learn, besides, to steal locked cars and hidden documents; others would be charged with the organization of strikes and slow-downs among the workers.

At this time the cult of jazz that had swept France and Belgium before the war was suddenly revived and spread into the most unlikely circles. In every café, on every corner, there was talk of swing. At first there seemed to be



no reason why a man should greet his friend with: "Are you a jitterbug?" and receive the reply: "I'm a swing fan. Hurrah for zazou!"

This was the first signal of recognition adopted by the meeting at Liège. In a fortnight it was replaced by another, but it survived among the uninitiate as an indication of pro-Allied sentiment. The Germans at last recognized the significance of this apparent devotion to American music, but by now there was no danger to the White Brigade: the Germans could only ban all records by Duke Ellington and Louis Armstrong and the other jazz men.

Back in Brussels, Buchet prevailed on the others to move their headquarters from the Rue du Pepin to the Rue Hôtel des Monnaies. Every week new recruits came there to enroll, some from as far away as Vilvorde and Malines. Buchet sent these back to create sections in their own towns. Looking back to his own hesitant days of 1940, Buchet thought that he would never have believed it possible to organize hatred on such a scale.

One evening he left the headquarters with Roger Libion, a student who had lost his family and some of his fortune in the war. Libion turned up his coat collar against the dank drizzle. "I have a strange feeling sometimes," he said, "as if something cold and wet were closing in on me. Sometimes I wake up at night with a start. Other times I can't sleep because I feel so helpless against the damn Germans!"

"How old are you?" Buchet asked, knowing that the student could not be very much younger than himself.

Libion seemed to evade the question. "Old enough to die," he said dully.

They walked in silence awhile under a dark sky. Buchet was amazed that Belgium had held out a year already against the occupation. Surely the Germans would never be able to overcome England! Libion broke in on his thoughts.

"I am ripening a plan," he whispered, speaking rapidly. "You know that Degrelle and Matthys are the mainsprings of the Rexist treason. They have an office near the Rue de Laeken—a sort of staff headquarters. It seems to me that it's time our people had an example and these others a bloody lesson. I've been working on it for months, getting all the background information I can, so I won't fail. I'm going to try to get the two leaders and the Rexist secretary at the same time. But I need some raw materials." He smiled. "Can you get some for me?"

"How do you plan to go about it?" Buchet avoided answering.

"By dressing as a German soldier and leaving a time bomb once I get inside."

Buchet said nothing until they reached a corner where they were to take different streets. They parted then without any further reference to Libion's project. Buchet lingered a little, looking after his friend. In a moment he saw two gray forms detach themselves from a mass of shadow and follow the student.

Buchet felt nervous. Libion was being watched. What should he do—should he go to Libion's home at once and warn him? No, that would only tip off the Germans and get him into trouble. He would tell Libion the next day.

On September 29 several factories taken over by the Germans were set afire at Malines. At the same time, in Molenbeek-Saint-Jean, firemen called to another plant just re-equipped by the Germans found their water supply cut off.

Buchet had meanwhile called on Libion to warn him that he was being followed and, after hearing more of his plan, had called a meeting of a few men to put it into performance. On their way to the Rue Hôtel des Monnaies, none of them failed to notice the big black posters in which the German military governor of Belgium, General Alexander

von Falkenhausen, announced the death penalty for saboteurs.

Chaudron was the first to arrive at the meeting, bringing the necessary explosives. Malibran followed with revolvers. Libion came in and refused a chair, preferring to pace up and down the room as they discussed his plan, making little alterations here and there. Malibran's guns would be given to three or four reliable men who would stand guard in the street that led from the Boulevard Emile Jacqmain to the Rue de Laeken; Chaudron would be in command of them. They were not to fire except in the greatest emergency.

The attempt was to be made the next day. As the meeting broke up Buchet took Libion by the arm. "You remember what I told you the other day," he said. "I'll do the job tomorrow."

"Why?"

"Because if anybody follows you it'll be too bad."

Libion was obviously disappointed. "But what shall I do?"

"You can spend the day working up a foolproof alibi for all of us. I know you've done more than your share for us already, but you must obey, for the sake of all of us."

Libion shrugged. "All right. Be at the Rue des Comédiens bookshop at ten tomorrow morning, then; everything will be ready."

Buchet lay awake the whole night, turning back and forth in his bed, until his wife awoke. "I know you're going to do something," she said; "I can tell it. Won't you let me help you?" But he told her, almost gruffly, to go back to sleep.

Early on the morning of October 1, after a vile cup of black coffee-substitute, he left the house and walked slowly to the shop. The others were also there ahead of time. In a back room Chaudron was checking over the bomb and Malibran was brushing out a gray uniform.

"One of our members," he explained to Buchet, "is a cleaning woman at the Kommandatur, and she brought us

some seals and wrappings that were on a registered parcel sent from Berlin. They'll come in handy: we'll wrap up the bomb in them and address it to Degrelle and his secretary, Jean Oedekerke. By the way, be careful with the string—you might get hurt. It's tied to another inside that will set the thing off. I hope both our friends will be there to open it together."

"That's a postman's uniform," Chaudron said. "Bag, too. Put it on, Buchet—I think it'll fit."

Buchet stripped off his outer clothes and put on the uniform. The fit was not bad enough to attract attention.

"Let's start, then," Malibran said. "Chaudron's men are at their places already; he'll join them. I'll go with you as far as the boulevard—but a little behind you. Don't let on that we know each other. I have a gun and I'll use it if anything comes up."

"Right."

Buchet slung the postman's bag over his shoulder. The package was cradled in a miscellany of papers. As he walked he caught sight of a postman in a shop-window and at first he did not recognize himself. His hands were cold and his heavy shoes made an ominous sound on the pavements. Passing a group of German soldiers, he felt his back go chill and he almost turned around. With an effort, however, he continued, pretending to be unconcerned. But he knew that he must be dead-white; he feared that any passer-by could tell what he was about to do.

At a turning he looked back; Malibran was hardly twenty paces behind, his hands in his pockets. Buchet wondered which hand held the revolver.

In the boulevard there were many more German soldiers. Then, at the little Rue du Pont Neuf, Buchet turned again, and saw a tall, blond young man whose face was vaguely familiar. The blond man beckoned with his head, and two men who stood gossiping across the street started to walk slowly

toward the Rexists' office. These must be ours, Buchet thought. Ahead of him, in the entrance of the Rue de Laeken, two others paced up and down.

Buchet's feet seemed to drag as he drew nearer the "Brown House," as the Belgians called the Fascists' headquarters. He had to make indescribable efforts of will to go on, but at last he was at the door and rang the bell.

A young man in a Rexist uniform opened a sliding panel and then the door when he saw the postman's uniform. "I'll take the mail," he said.

"I have a registered parcel for Monsieur Degrelle," Buchet said.

"But he isn't here."

"Then he'll have to pick it up at the post office."

"Can't you leave it with me?"

"No, it's registered," Buchet repeated, afraid lest his insistence betray him. "It's from a ministry in Berlin—it must be important—and addressed to Monsieur Degrelle and Monsieur Oedeckerke."

The young Rexist was impressed. "Let me have it, then, and I'll take it to Monsieur Oedeckerke."

"I have to deliver it myself and see him sign for it—it's the rule."

"All right, then." The guard turned, motioning to Buchet to follow him. At the stairway another Rexist stopped them and took the package to read the address. Buchet trembled lest a clumsy jerk at the string destroy his plan and himself. But the second guard handed back the package, and Buchet was finally shown into an office that overlooked the street. On a large desk there were signed photographs of Degrelle and Hitler. Oedeckerke looked up. "What is it?" he demanded.

"Registered parcel, sir; from Berlin."

"Good. Put it down here, will you?"

Buchet deposited his package carefully on a pile of German newspapers and produced a nondescript notebook. "Would

you mind signing, sir?" he asked. Oedekerke signed automatically, hardly looking at the paper before him, and Buchet left the office.

He wanted to run, but he dared not even give vent to the sigh of relief that welled in him. With studied slowness he went downstairs and past the guard, thinking: "If only I can get out of here before he opens it!" Then he was at the door, which the young Rexist opened for him with a smile.

Thunder roared in his ears. But it was only the closing of the door. He was sweating profusely, but even outdoors he dared not run. Now he would be satisfied to reach the boulevard before the explosion.

He succeeded; Chaudron had joined the blond man and they smiled as he passed. Now Buchet could walk a little faster, and his hands seemed warmer. He walked on, more and more rapidly, and when somewhere behind him he heard a distant explosion he felt a glow of pride in work well done.

Chaudron had remained near by to observe the results. Glass showered over the street, with fragments of brick and plaster, and men ran screaming from the "Brown House." Chaudron moved closer in the crowd attracted by the explosion and saw the bleeding body of Jean Oedekerke hurried into an ambulance from St. John's Hospital. His mangled hands were pressed against his shattered belly.

Chaudron recalled the phrase of the firing squads. Justice had been done.

The next day's newspapers denounced the "crime of Jews and Communists." But the people felt lifted up by the knowledge that there were brave men left among them. General von Falkenhausen caused the posting of notices warning "troublemakers" and "terrorists" that the person of every German was inviolate and that any attempt on the life of such a man would be followed by swift retribution. Libion, going home one evening, stopped to read one of

these announcements and noticed that his two shadows, of whom Buchet had warned him, were still with him. Nonetheless, he went on to his rooms, meditating a new attack, and slept soundly.

Dawn had not yet broken when he was awakened by a strange sound. It seemed to come from the corridor of the house, but he could not identify it. Cautiously he got out of bed and went to the window; below it he saw a group of Germans, some of them in uniform.

The sky began to pale and he understood. Drawing the curtains close over the window, he lit a match and touched it to a paper that he took from a volume on his bookshelves. And now there were steps on the stairway, a knock at his door. Before he could decide what to do he heard a locksmith at work. Then a heavy voice ordered the occupant to open in the name of the law. Libion obeyed.

Six men stood on his threshold with drawn revolvers. "What do you want?" Libion asked with an attempt at calm.

"You are Roger Libion, student?" the leader of the Germans countered.

"Yes."

"You are under arrest. Dress yourself at once."

Under the muzzles of six revolvers Libion clothed himself; then he was manacled and held by two of the men while the others burrowed in his bed, his closets, his desk. At last, as a soiled dawn appeared over the roofs of the city, he was hustled into a German automobile and driven away.

The newspapers that afternoon announced his arrest but added that the Kommandatur, to show the people of Belgium that it was not vengeful, had pardoned Villa, Neufchatel, and the others who had been convicted of helping Englishmen to escape from Belgium. They were to be released within a few days.

## VI

GERMANY had invaded Russia! Stunned at first, the world had soon begun to hope that here Hitler had made the worst miscalculation of his career. The Russians were being forced back, it was true—as who had not been before the German armor?—but not without tremendous battles and huge losses for the attacker. While the free world waited for the shattering of the German armies, the underground movement in Belgium, as elsewhere, was suddenly infused with new ardor as the Communists redoubled their efforts to overthrow the invader. Now every resource that they had held in reserve—hidden weapons as well as untouched plans—was unhesitatingly contributed to the common end.

Throughout Hainaut, as in the other eight provinces, the tide of sabotage and death rolled high. In August, when Smolensk's fate was in doubt, the suborned press burst into denunciation of the unknown executioners of a traitor in Leuze.

The act, in its conception, had caused some hesitation to Freeman and Buchet. But the White Brigade's sections in Mons, La Louvière, Charleroi, Ath, and Tournai were by now thoroughly organized, and the project was by no means impossible.

Leuze is a sleepy little Walloon village not far from Tournai, its town hall enveloped by a network of narrow streets. Just north of the town there is a new road, and in May of 1940 this little place learned all the horrors of war when the Germans swept past, leaving a good many scars in rehearsal for the destruction of Tournai. The main in-



dustry of this little town on the edge of Flanders and France was textile mills.

As soon as the occupation forces took over in Belgium a representative of the German textile industry had tried to establish contact with the owners of these mills, who refused even to receive him. One Schnock, however, who managed a hosiery factory, sought out the German and came away radiant from their conference.

Schnock then called a meeting of the textile men, to whom he explained the inevitable German triumph and the course that prudent industrialists would take to adapt themselves to it. He urged them to form a committee that would distribute all German orders to the various mills in the area; their plants, he assured them, could be working on a twenty-four-hour basis to supply the German army's needs.

His audience refused without a moment's debate; such a committee, everyone insisted, would in effect be no more than the instrument of the occupation authorities. Schnock, who had probably made certain commitments to the Germans, grew angry; he made threats. But it was vain. Schnock—as his name evidenced, he was himself of German origin—stormed out of the meeting and took the next train for Brussels.

When he returned from the capital the next day a squad of soldiers left the train with him. He led them straight to the office of the owner of the factory that he managed and, reinforced by their presence, proffered to his employer a document commanding him to surrender not only his factory but his residence without delay. The same document named Schnock as the administrator of both.

The owner of the factory had no choice. But his workmen and the former friends of Schnock could at least display their resentment. The workmen slowed their production by tacit consent; when Schnock appeared in the plant he was surrounded by whispers of "Boche!" "Traitor!" that he

could never trace to the men who uttered them. And every house in Leuze was closed to him.

In March 1941 the Germans appointed Schnock administrator of all the factories in his district. Once more he summoned the owners, this time with the voice of authority, in a last effort to win their co-operation. They would have to yield or else . . . Within a week every one of them had been stripped of all that he had owned, business and personal property alike. Schnock abolished the wage scales that had obtained under the former owners, took it on himself to repeal all the labor laws of Belgium as far as these factories under his jurisdiction were concerned, and was never satisfied with the production figures.

One morning Schnock's secretary informed him that the Kommandatur in Brussels was on the telephone. Schnock picked up the instrument and was told by a Major Hauser that Berlin had just ordered all textile plants to increase their output by forty per cent, effective at once, in order to prepare for the winter campaign in Russia.

"But I'm going full blast already," Schnock replied. "I haven't enough men as it is, and nobody to increase their production."

"Don't worry about that," the guttural voice answered. "I have two young men on my staff who are experts in increasing production. I'll send them along; you'll see, they'll be able to help you."

The men, when they arrived, seemed to be in their early twenties. Both had worked, they said, in the Simonis factories in Verviers and, after their return from France, whither they had followed the Belgian army, they had offered their services to the occupier. This remark immediately disposed Schnock toward them and he listened while they discoursed at length on the merits of forming a horizontal or a vertical trust of all the local plants. Schnock saw at once that these men would indeed be useful to him.

An inter-office telephone rang: Schnock's presence was needed in the dyeing room. He invited his visitors to go with him; it would give them a chance to inspect this factory. The three left Schnock's office in high spirits.

Some time later Schnock's secretary was called again to the inter-office telephone. The head of the dyeing room wanted to know, with some heat, why Schnock had not appeared.

"But he left right after you called!" the girl said. "That was more than an hour ago."

"Well," the man replied sourly, "he hasn't shown up yet."

The secretary sat down and methodically called every branch of the establishment. No one had seen the director anywhere. The watchman at the gate reported that the two young men from the Kommandatur had left about a half-hour before. But the director had not gone out with them. The girl telephoned Schnock's home; perhaps the watchman had not seen him leave. But he was not at home.

The secretary called the works manager and informed him of what had happened. The manager at once formed several search parties and assigned each to a different part of the plant. After an hour of the most minute investigation of every department someone thought of the lavatories. In one of these, nearest to his office, Schnock was found at last, crumpled on the floor before the urinals, into which his blood had poured. He had been stabbed between the shoulders.

The town chief of police was summoned at once. Before he left his office he telephoned the Kommandatur in Tournai, which sent its men without delay. Under their questioning the gateman and Schnock's secretary gave accurate descriptions of Schnock's visitors. The secretary, in addition, told of their conversation with Schnock and the telephone call that had preceded their arrival.

The police communicated with the Kommandatur in Brus-

sels. No telephone call had been made to Schnock from there for several days. But the caller, whoever he was, must have known of Schnock's dealings with Major Hauser. The telephone company's records were then investigated. The call, it appeared, had been made from the Catholic Youth Club, where, a waitress said, two young men had ordered beer that morning and then asked for the telephone directory.

The German police from Tournai seized ten hostages in Leuze. Several of them were former industrialists, ousted by Schnock. These were taken to Tournai for questioning. But neither they nor the other hostages could give any worthwhile information. Their detention went on while the hunt for the two young men continued.

In August 1941 Buchet went to Tournai to confer with the leaders of resistance there. But they either could not or would not tell him who had killed Schnock or where the men had gone. Buchet could learn no more than the facts that the Germans had published, with particular emphasis on the locale and the means of death.

He took advantage of his stay, however, to canvass the possibilities of crossing into France. It was utterly impossible in this northern region: the entire zone between Tournai and Lille was heavily garrisoned. In Tournai itself, where two thousand houses had been leveled and only the cathedral rose above the wreckage, patriotic citizens wrestled with the problem of overthrowing the Germans and their tools. Everyone agreed that they would be impressed only by violence. But how was it to be carried out?

Buchet soon left for Brussels, stopping at Ath to attend a meeting of resistance in the Guide Restaurant there. Members from Flobecq, Lessines, and Ghislenghien were present, imbued with the determination to augment all their activities, to rouse the nation and utilize every means of aiding the Allied cause. Months earlier this determination had begun to

seep through the country; it was in May 1941 that an Overseas News Agency dispatch reported:

The intensification of the sabotage campaign in Belgium has led to organized thefts of military papers, photographic apparatus, and other articles taken from German army cars.

But this was not enough. Such thefts had been committed, with considerable daring, in the streets of Brussels; often arms had been stolen. But more must still be done.

Chaudron, who lived near the slaughterhouses, had learned through one of his men that a cattle train was to spend the night on a siding of the West Brussels freight station, awaiting the arrival of another from Ninove that was to be coupled to it for consignment to Germany. Chaudron had prepared a plan of action that was to begin at 10:30 P.M.

In pairs and by different routes, the members of the White Brigade left their meeting place and sauntered to the Black-Pool Café, near the station, where they were to make final plans. A slow drink apiece and muttered talk, and they left again.

In the warm August night men stood coatless on the sidewalks in conversational groups, when a sudden cry of "Fire!" rang out. The chatting bunches dissolved and streamed toward a warehouse opposite the station, now used by the Germans to store goods awaiting shipment eastward.

Chaudron had tossed a flaming oil-soaked torch through a broken window on the ground floor of the warehouse. Little time elapsed before the flames had taken firm hold. Chaudron and his colleagues had, in the interval, returned to a public square from which they could clearly see the fire spreading through the building and its contents. German guards were rushing out of the station, and a bucket brigade had been formed to do its best until the fire engines arrived.

"Good enough!" Chaudron breathed excitedly to the others. "Now come on, and make it fast!"

One by one they ran, following their leader around the station and across an empty lot behind it until they reached the fence that marked the line of the tracks. One man crouched on his hands and knees and the others, in single file, stepped up on his back, threw a leg over the fence, and dropped on the other side. Turning back for a moment, they could see the warehouse fire gaining despite the arrival of the engines.

Ahead of them the boxcars stood black, and out of them rose a plaintive lowing. In a surprisingly few minutes the raiders had smashed the doors with whatever lay to hand and lowered the ramps.

The warehouse fire was not brought under control until dawn. The weary Germans, hurrying back to their beds, learned then that every cow and every steer in the train was gone. Infuriated officers ordered them to find the cattle at once, and special squads were sent from the Oberbühnenkommandatur to join the roundup.

Two cows were picked up at last in the Rue Delaunoy; thirty-seven others were found on the Ghent highway between a football field and a cemetery. Twenty-five animals got as far as Koekelberg, while one was discovered peacefully browsing beside the canal. What happened to the rest was never officially determined, but for a week the air from Molenbeek to Koekelberg was heavy with the aroma of steaks. The heavy fines imposed on the communities were lightly taken.

Later in August, on a Monday, a group of men was to leave for France. But their departure could not take place until Freeman had received a report on German military activities in the Brussels-La Louvière region. By Saturday the report, which was long overdue, had not yet arrived, and Buchet was sent to the furnished room of Camille Mogenet, who was supposed to have sent the information. Buchet felt a little apprehension as he went, for more than one member of the

organization had found that a visit to a friend could end in a prison.

In the window of the house where Mogenet lived a sign announced a room to rent. Buchet professed an interest in it and found that Mogenet had been away for several days, leaving no address. This was a serious matter, he realized as he returned to the group's quarters, for certain men in England were waiting for that report on German military dispositions and industrial seizures.

Mogenet had helpers in Binche, a town between La Louvière and the border, and Buchet was sent there for information. A teacher who belonged to the White Brigade had given him the name of a reliable gendarme in Binche, who informed Buchet that Mogenet and two of his assistants, Jean Derave and Albert Dehavay, had been arrested as spies and sent to Saint-Gilles Prison for questioning by the Gestapo.

Nothing could be done from the outside for the three prisoners, who were brought at length to Gestapo headquarters in Brussels in the Avenue Louise, where they were questioned for twelve hours. Dehavay, a man of mediocre health, collapsed twice. The restorative prescribed by the Germans was the whip. But no confessions were forthcoming and the men remained prisoners.

Early in September members of the White Brigade in Le Zoute succeeded in poisoning a German agent named Werner Reese, sent to Flanders to disseminate propaganda. The Germanized papers made much of his death and announced a public interment for September 12 in the cemetery of Evere. Buchet and Freeman felt sure that the most prominent Belgian traitors would attend, and they arranged to make a record of these tools of the enemy for future use.

A brigadier in Evere belonged to the tennis club there, which overlooked the cemetery. In an upper room of the clubhouse they installed a stolen camera with a telescopic lens and focused it on the newly dug grave of the German. The

tennis player and a photographer were left in charge of the camera, and Buchet and Freeman found it easy to mingle with the spectators when the funeral procession passed. And so the Belgian government in London, some time later, had an excellent picture of German officialdom.

Shortly after the funeral the evening newspapers announced the murder of Gérard, an aspirant for the post of burgomaster of Tournai. The Rexist had been found in a urinal, stabbed between the shoulders. Buchet immediately noted the resemblance to the killing of Schnock in Leuze.

That same night two young men rang at Buchet's door. He had long since taken the precaution of never answering the door, so the men told Mme. Buchet that they had just come from Tournai and mentioned a name known to Buchet. But he was suspicious and told his wife to say that he was out. The strangers seemed disappointed and told Mme. Buchet that they would wait for her husband at the Clock Bar, at the corner of the Wavre Road.

After an hour of careful thought Buchet went to the Clock. The two young men were recognizable at once by their impatient attitudes, and they convinced him easily of their affiliation with the White Brigade of Hainaut Province. Their names, they said, were Henri Talboom and Robert Lelong; they had killed Gérard that morning and fled to Brussels. Buchet, they had been told, would find them a safe hide-out. Neither they nor Buchet mentioned Schnock.

Buchet knew of a small boardinghouse in the Avenue du Roi, kept by the brother of a brigadier. The three men went there at once, walking with apparent indifference past scores of German policemen. When they reached the house Buchet spoke aside to the proprietor, who agreed to take the men in without writing their names in his official records that he had to submit to the authorities. Buchet left them there after promising to meet them the following evening in the Rue Hôtel des Monnaies.



He had barely stepped onto the sidewalk again when he saw a German patrol swing round the corner and come toward him. His heart beat heavily as he drew abreast of them, whistling tunelessly. He deliberately slowed his step, but they paid no attention. Buchet did not dare look back until he had reached the next corner.

Then he saw the two policemen standing in front of the boardinghouse. Buchet slipped into the shadow of a doorway. He saw one of the Germans reach out his hand, as if to ring; a moment later light poured faintly out and he saw the head of the housemaid. After a second or two the Germans went into the house.

Buchet could hardly keep silent. If they had come a moment or two earlier they would have got him. But what was to be done now? Buchet stood indecisive, wondering whether he should run for help for the two killers. Who could have betrayed them, he wondered; how could the Germans have arrived so quickly? Had they been followed?

From his doorway Buchet watched the passage of light from one window to another in the boardinghouse. On, off, on again somewhere else: it was obvious that the men were searching every floor. Sweating, Buchet remembered suddenly that, without noticing it at the time, he had heard a telephone dial in another room while he was talking to the owner of the house. Who could it have been?

Three sharp shots broke his thoughts. The lights in the house blinked out; then there were a few cries and silence. Buchet fought for breath; he wanted to run, but he dared not move. It was insane to stay, but he would allow himself another minute.

The door of the boardinghouse sprang open, and the servant girl ran shrieking into the empty street. She was followed by two shadows that Buchet recognized as his recent companions. One of them pointed a gun at her; she ran in-

side again and slammed the door. The two men ran toward the Saint-Gilles Club's football field as a window of the boardinghouse was thrown open and the owner leaned out, howling: "Police! Murder!"

It was now quite time for Buchet to vanish. He ran round the corner, then into another doorway when he saw shaded headlights. A truckload of German policemen rushed past him. Buchet resumed his journey at a faster pace, met by that of his thoughts. He wondered whether Talboom and Lelong had got away, how he himself had escaped arrest.

He tried to reconstruct the probable course of events. The servant must have seen the men enter the house and then telephoned the police while Buchet was talking to her employer. Then, no doubt, when the first two policemen arrived they must have telephoned for reinforcements.

Buchet was trembling as he walked. What steps could he take now? Perhaps his family was endangered; perhaps the group would have to find a new meeting place. Hurrying home, he felt that a circle of fire was closing in on him. He thought of the Overmans, the Fraiponts, the Meltiors—what had happened to them would happen to him. A wave of utter fatigue swept over him; he stumbled and almost fell. What would his wife and child do when they were alone?

Denise was waiting for him when he came in. The child, he was glad to learn, was sleeping soundly.

"How pale you are, Jean!" his wife greeted him, frightened. "What's happened?"

Buchet made an effort to appear normal. "Nothing at all, my dear. Nothing out of the ordinary."

"But you scare me!" she insisted.

He took her hand. "Denise, listen to me. If ever I don't come home some night, you'll have to keep your chin up."

He said nothing more, for she had bowed her head without a word and he knew that she was weeping.

A few days later Buchet learned that Talboom and Lelong had gone to La Hulpe on that night of September 17 after they had killed the two German policemen. They thought that Buchet had been arrested and they did not dare come near his house. It was dawn when they arrived at Freeman's house, and he had sent them as soon as possible to join a group setting out for France. They had escaped!

They were safe, but on September 23 a military court condemned Mogenet, Derave, and Dehavay to death. The announcement was followed by fires and explosions in Brussels and Malines. A new wave of train derailments brought the total since the occupation to 405, and the Oberfeldkommandatur warned of drastic penalties. For four weeks the three men waited for the execution of their sentences—though, as a matter of form, they had appealed for clemency—while the mounting tide of resistance infuriated the Germans.

On the evening of October 21 the warder came into their cell to announce that their petition had been refused. They were to be ready for execution at dawn. Dehavay, who had collapsed twice during his interrogation, shrugged. "Then we must die—like Belgians!" They spent the night writing to their families and received the last rites of the Church.

As dawn broke through the barred window they heard the accustomed sounds of the waking prison. Three cells down, Dehavay knew, there was a porter from the Hôtel Métropole who was to be released in a day or two. In the traditional way he tapped on the heating pipes that ran through all the cells so that his neighbors could transmit the message further: "Tell Sans we're going to be shot today. Tell him to tell my wife and my parents to be brave."

The three men refused the customary glass of rum when the German sentry opened their cell door at six-thirty. Now it was all over. On each bed lay a little package containing a wallet, a picture or two, a watch, and a letter.

They left the cell and marched erect, guarded before and behind, to the courtyard. Their names were already being erased from the lists of the living; in the distance they heard an Angelus. Once in the courtyard, they were ordered to mount into the uncovered body of a truck, where they stood among seated Germans with bayoneted rifles. The night before, the Governor General had announced by radio that they were to be executed in the Tir National, to which they would be taken in an open vehicle through the principal streets in order that Belgians might see for themselves what price they would pay for sabotage or spying.

When the truck passed through the Porte de Hal and came on the boulevard it rolled between two solid black lines of kneeling men, women, and children. Not one of the beholders moved, save to cross himself or raise his fingers in the V sign. Even the little children held up their chilled blue fingers.

On every street that the truck entered the scene was the same. The lines seemed endless, kneeling there in the raw autumn morning. Before the Stock Exchange a woman sang hymns aloud. The condemned men spoke little, awed by the tribute that, they knew, was not only for them but for all Belgium. They did not see Buchet, whose arm flew up as they passed. But it was only a gesture of farewell, like all the others.

A block or two before they reached the Tir National the sidewalks emptied again as suddenly as they had filled. The truck stopped; the Germans dismounted and led their victims to the wall against which, a quarter century before, Edith Cavell had stood. The officer commanding the firing squad seemed almost embarrassed; his voice quavered a little as he gave his orders. A priest handed each man a crucifix; Derave asked to be neither bound nor blindfolded. The priest consulted with the German lieutenant on the matter while the sun rose dirtily over the roofs of Schaerbeek. The

blindfold was dispensed with, but the soldiers bound them.

The sound of passing trams carried clearly on the chilly air. Somewhere a dog barked. The priest took his station behind the firing squad, kissed his crucifix, and began to pray. A cloud hid the sun.

"One! . . . Two! . . ." The last word was lost in the roar of shots as the three men in unison cried: "*Vive la Belgique!*" Then the same ceremony was repeated, but only two were left to cry. At last there was only one. And then the three bodies, bound round the waist by one rope that held all to the wall, hung broken and bloody. The sun came out of its cloud when the blood of the martyrs of 1940 had mingled, in that desecrated soil, with the blood of those of 1914.

The *Bruesseler Zeitung* of October 22—the German organ—announced curtly:

Die vom Feldgericht des Kommandieren den Generals und fehls-habers im Luftgau Belgien-Nordf. Reich wegen Spionage zum Tod verurteilen Belgier: 1. Cav. Mogenet von P. essels—2. Jean Derave von Binche—3. Albert Dehavay von B. che—sind am 22 Oktober 1941 erschossen worden.

The clipping was posted without comment on the wall of the White Brigade's headquarters. The roll of the dead was growing. According to an independent clandestine paper, *The Voice of Belgium*, forty-six persons, including twenty-five hostages, had been executed in September. One of them was a man named Janssen, unaffiliated with any group, who had attacked a German soldier. A brigadier of Couvin, Alfred-Emile Bastin, had met the same fate. Three days after the triple execution reported by the *Bruesseler Zeitung*, Emile Foucart of La Louvière, a friend of Dehavay, had been executed in his own town for "spreading Communist propaganda."

The Brigade moved its quarters to a room above the apartment of a milliner in the Rue Lesbroussart. November was a

terrible month in Belgium. While the Crimea fell into German hands Belgians were dying of hunger and tuberculosis was rampant in all the schools.

On November 16 someone brought a copy of the *Brueseler Zeitung* to a Brigade meeting. He had marked a passage, which he read aloud, translating as he went:

"The German police have succeeded in identifying the men who murdered two German policemen on September 17, 1941: Henri Talboom, baker, born December 5, 1919, at Puers, and Robert Lelong, mechanic, born May 5, 1919, at Armeignies. The same day they killed the Rexist official, Gérard, in Tournai, and five weeks earlier they murdered the industrialist, Schnock, in Leuze. A reward of 10,000 Rentenmark will be paid to the person or persons responsible for their apprehension."

One of his hearers asked whether the fugitives were in a place of safety. "Yes," Freeman replied, "they're in Morocco."

"What about their families?"

"They've been warned to be careful. They'll probably try to get out."

"What's become of Dehavay's wife—widow?" Chaudron inquired.

No one knew. But the next day, in midmorning, a young woman in mourning appeared at the employment office of the Grands Magasins de l'Innovation, one of the city's biggest department stores. Timorously she told the interviewer that she had heard that the store was hiring young women for its sales force and that she wanted a job.

"I'm very sorry," the man replied, "but all the jobs have been filled, miss."

"I am Madame Albert Dehavay," she replied proudly, and rose to go.

"One moment, madame," the interviewer said quickly. "Wasn't there a man of that name shot last month?"

"He was my husband," she said with even greater pride in her voice.

The man flushed. "Ah—you are really in need of employment, madame?"

"Yes. I have an eighteen-month-old child." She had difficulty in restraining a sob.

"I most humbly apologize, madame! When would you want to start work?"

The martyr's widow became a seller of neckties.

## VII

BUCHET was sitting alone in the furnished room in the Rue Lesbroussart, awaiting the arrival of La Hulpe, Lienaerts, and the others. His thoughts wandered from America's declaration that she would be the arsenal of democracy—when would she become a pawn, he wondered, or, better still, a queen on that chessboard where all the squares were red?—to the apprehensive feeling that had been rising in him latterly, as if he were being hunted. From time to time he tried to focus his attention on the *Bruesseler Zeitung*, but it was difficult. Then the ringing of the bell distracted him. Probably it was Freeman or Chaudron. He heard Robert Wiesenberg, who had been posted outside the room on guard, open the street door. But no one came up the stairs.

At last there was the sound of steps, then the customary knock at the door. Buchet opened; it was Wiesenberg. "There's a young man from Liège downstairs—says his name's Fervin. He says Minute sent him to see 'Cent as in *centaine* [hundred].'" Minute was the alias of Arthur Coene, the Liège notary who played so large a part in the Brigade's activities there.

"Send him up," Buchet said.

"I don't know," Wiesenberg mused. "I had a bad hunch when I saw him. I told him there was nobody here by that name but I'd find out whether anybody knew such a person. I don't like his looks or his accent."

"You did right, Wiesenberg, even if Minute did send him."

"How do we know he ever saw Minute?"

"Well, we don't. Look: go back and tell him you couldn't find any Monsieur 'Cent as in *centaine*,' but there's an old tenant on the second floor who might be able to help him. Then send him up here and stay outside. Don't let the rest come in. If Freeman comes while this fellow's here tip him off and have him follow the guy when he leaves."

Wiesenberg went downstairs. A moment or two later a dull-skinned man came into the room. He had rather worried eyes set deep between his high cheekbones. Buchet looked up from his German paper.

"I'm Alfred Fervin of Liège," the stranger introduced himself. "Minute sent me."

"Who's Minute?" Buchet demanded harshly.

"You know, the notary in Liège."

"No, I don't. There are lots of notaries in Liège."

"But you must know Minute!" Fervin insisted.

"There's no notary by that name in Liège," Buchet retorted.

"All right, skip it. I was sent to see somebody named Cent on important business."

"Cent? Like *centaine*?"

"Maybe."

"I think I've heard that name," Buchet said reflectively. "I have a lunch appointment tomorrow with a man who I think knows him. Why don't you come back about this time tomorrow and I'll try to get his address for you?"

Apparently disappointed, Fervin thanked him and went



out. Buchet went to the window and saw him come out on the sidewalk, light a cigarette, and start off in the direction of the Avenue Louise. Across the street three men were watching Fervin; one of them—Freeman—started unostentatiously to follow him.

The others went upstairs to join Buchet. Wiesenberg came into the room to find out what had happened and to deliver a message. "Freeman's watching him," he said, "but he says we shouldn't stay here today—too dangerous. He suggests we meet him this evening at the Rose Bar."

When they gathered at the café they sat in a large booth. Chaudron called for a deck of cards with their drinks, to lull any suspicion of the group, and they pretended an interest that they did not feel in the game that followed. Everyone was worrying.

After an hour Freeman entered the café. He looked uncertainly around, then saw his friends and joined them. His face was paler than usual.

"Bad news," he said. Lienaerts, whose turn it was to deal, laid down his cards. "I followed our man for a hell of a long time. He took a streetcar; I took the same one. He got off at the Louise Gate and took another. So did I. Finally he wound up in the palace, with me behind him. We climbed two flights of stairs, and then I hung back a little. But I saw him stop to talk to several Germans, officers and civilians, including my friend Dr. Bratt."

"That's damned bad," Chaudron muttered.

"Yes. We've got to watch out. Rue Lesbroussart is all over now—we'll have to find another place. And we ought to get in touch with Liége. It's quite obvious that Fervin knows something about us. He knows Coene's alias, and he's on the trail of Buchet's. Lucky he thought it was Cent instead of Sans."

Each man present was charged with the task of finding a

new meeting place; meanwhile the Rose Bar would have to do. But they were afraid lest too-frequent appearances there should excite suspicion.

By coincidence Buchet received a visit at his home the next morning from another resident of Liège, who brought a report on the activities there. Buchet's first question to him was: "Do you know anyone named Fervin?"

"I was just going to tell you about him. Minute sends you his thanks for having detailed him to us—he's done some swell jobs."

"What!" Buchet leaped from his chair.

"Yes, he joined us a couple of weeks ago—he said Sans had sent him, and Minute okayed him. He did a masterful job at Herstal—we tied up work at the arsenal there for days!"

"He's the Germans' man," Buchet said more quietly.

His visitor went white. Buchet told him of Fervin's visit and the results of Freeman's detective work; then he asked: "When do you plan to go back?"

"Day after tomorrow."

"Too late. You must leave tomorrow at the latest. This is quite literally a matter of life and death for your whole crowd."

The Liège visitor had still to make his report, however, and Buchet listened attentively. A strike had been in progress for weeks, called on the pretext of the miners' unwillingness to join the one official union organized by the Germans. Another group of the White Brigade had devoted itself to damaging the Albert Canal, which the Germans used to transport heavy goods to Antwerp and Flemish agricultural products to the Rhineland. A number of locks had been made useless; barges had been sunk, and the grain loaded on others had been adulterated so that it was inedible. The Liège group had established separate sections for arson, strikes, sabotage in mines, factories and agriculture, and death squads. Buchet's

visitor showed him a clipping from a clandestine paper called *Résistance*, dated June 2 and headed: "BRAVO, LIEGE":

Bomb explosions have occurred at Rexist headquarters, in the Labor Bureau, and in the Nagant factory, where Rexist guards were garrisoned (seven killed and seven wounded), as well as in the powerhouses. Sabotage is now an institution in Liège.

The secretary of the commune of Visé, a Rexist, has been shot to death.

"Besides these things," the visitor added, putting the clipping back in his wallet, "we're all set to blow up the elevator of the No. 1 pit at Montegnée. You've seen this, of course?" He produced another clipping, this one from the German-sponsored *Légia*:

The district of Liège has been ordered to pay a fine of 1,000,000 francs as the result of an attack on members of the Walloon [Fascist] Guards at Ans. Two Rexistes were killed and another was wounded. All cafés, theaters, and cinemas have been ordered to close at 7 P.M. Three hundred bicycles have been confiscated and all traffic is forbidden between 8 P.M. and 5 A.M.

Liège was indeed doing its share in the war of resistance. The *Nouveau Journal* of October 29, 1941, had told of various acts of sabotage committed in the city and the outlying area. Three vital railroad lines had been blown up in one night, and there had been innumerable thefts of explosives from the Germans. The paper added:

The Oberfeldkommandatur has reminded the populace that such acts may, in serious cases, entail the shooting of hostages. Those guilty of tampering with the railways will certainly be shot: damage to a railway is injury to the German army and, if the guilty persons are not found at once, hostages will be executed.

For the acts reported above the following penalties are imposed forthwith:

1. Twenty residents of the province of Liège, employed in various occupations, are to be arrested at once.

2. All cafés and places of amusement . . . shall be closed from 7 P.M. to 5 A.M. until further notice.

Every individual Belgian citizen is now responsible for the lives of his fellow citizens held as hostages.

Buchet's visitor left for his own city the next day, and the Brussels group resumed its activities. Freeman trailed Fervin on other occasions and saw him confer with Germans. Once Freeman shadowed him after he had left his masters and saw him enter a cheap bar. Freeman followed; Fervin went at once to a row of telephone booths. Freeman slowed his own steps so that he reached the telephones when Fervin was already in a booth. Freeman entered the next one and listened carefully, hardly daring to breathe.

"No," he heard Fervin say, "I haven't found Cent, but I picked up somebody else, in Molenbeek—Joseph Meyskens. . . . Right, I'll be there in a few minutes."

Freeman hurried into the bar proper. When Fervin passed him and went out Freeman followed. They got into a street-car and got off at the same point. Freeman, standing still and looking uncertain, like a man who had lost his way, saw Fervin enter a building at 7 Rue Traversière. Freeman moved to the door of the building. There was a uniformed guard in the hallway; when the guard turned away for a moment Freeman entered furtively. He heard the guard's footsteps going farther away and slipped up to a small table on which lay a closed ledger book labeled "G.F.P.—Entrance Record." He went out again.

When they met that night Freeman asked Buchet whether he knew what "G.F.P." might mean. Buchet could not help him. Chaudron, who led the Molenbeek sector, offered a few vague suggestions.

"By the way, Chaudron," Freeman said, "do you have a man named Meyskens in your outfit?"

"Yes, why?"

"Watch him. Fervin has tracked him down—or else they're working together."

"Impossible—I trust him absolutely."

"Then he'd better clear out right away. Send him to France with Monday's crew, and in the meantime he'll have to keep away from his house. But before you send him out ask him whether he knows Fervin's address."

On Monday Freeman was busy at the Grande Espinette, clearing up the final details of the departures. Buchet was at home that day. From his window he saw approaching the man from Liège who had recently visited him to report.

The first words he spoke when he was in Buchet's house were: "Well, you were right. The whole gang was sold out. Every last one was arrested while I was here—that's what saved me. But they searched my house and took my wife. I was tipped off by friends—the house was still under surveillance."

Buchet tried to express the sympathy that he felt, but words were inadequate. "You'd better go to England," he said.

"But I'd like to see my wife again—I want to know what's happening to her!"

"I know, old chap, but you can't. You haven't any right to make things worse for her or yourself, as you certainly would if you went back to Liège."

"It's damned hard!" The stranger sighed heavily.

"I know. But you've got to stick it. . . . I know who turned in your people—Fervin. He'll sell out others, too, if he gets the chance. You're going to leave for England in two weeks, but in the meantime I hope we can give you a chance for revenge, at least."

The Liège brigadier rose from his chair and stood erect, his eyes burning. "That'll be the happiest day of my life!" he said in a low, hard voice. "You can rely on me."

Almost a dozen patriots had indeed been arrested in Liège,

including all the men whom Freeman and Buchet knew there. The investigation of their cases was run through rapidly, for sabotage in that region had multiplied alarmingly, and the Germans wanted a new precedent. It would bear the names of Louis Geys, Robert Gendarme, Lambert Pallen, Georges Bechout, Georges Godisseur, Jules van de Walle, Jean de Renty, Guillaume Hocke, Arthur Coene, and Jules Lienaerts.

The presiding judge, von Mallincroth, was well informed. The Germans had exceeded their customary admirable thoroughness in preparing this case. With infinite pains they made sure to choose the least steadfast of the group (whose name shall not be revealed here), and they devoted themselves first to him.

The usual routine was followed: appeals to his familial sentiments were the first weapons used: the grief of his wife and child caused by his arrest. When this produced no results the prisoner was put into a cell whose dimensions permitted him neither to stand nor to lie at full length. He had to live folded over on himself, sustained on a diet kept carefully below subsistence level. Every day he was taken out of his cell for interrogation; every day he refused to give the information demanded of him.

"So you won't talk, you Belgian louse! Come here, fast!" his questioner would snarl from behind a desk, and his back would be seared by the leaden pellets sewn into the multiple tails of a whip. His hands were tied in a particularly painful position, and his guards spat in his face or stamped their cleated boots on his instep. The man screamed with agonized rage, but still he would not speak.

Then von Mallincroth ordered the guards to remove his shoes and beat the soles of his feet with the flat of the bayonet. After a quarter hour of this the prisoner was set upright and ordered to walk around the room, prodded, when he faltered, by the points of the same bayonets. Then they broke his great toe with a rifle butt.

Two weeks of this sort of treatment bore no fruit for the Germans. The prisoner's body was unrecognizable, but he stood firm. Then he was brought into an anteroom and allowed to sit down. A German sergeant took the next chair.

"Why do you keep this up?" the German said kindly. "You're quite wrong. The new order is here to stay; why don't you accept it? We Nazis are not savages, you know; all we want is some sign of co-operation and we'll be your best friends. Give us this sign and you can go back to your wife and child. They're waiting in the next room now."

The prisoner closed his eyes and covered his ears to shut out the temptation.

"Of course," his companion went on, his voice still quiet but terrifying now, "if you don't want to accept our generous offer we have other ways of getting what we want. Damned few people can keep secrets from us forever! I think you may very soon be sorry that you've been so stubborn."

The door of the next room opened. The man could not see into it, but he heard the voices of his wife and daughter. Too weak to rise, too beaten to struggle with himself, he called the child: "Julie! Julie!"

The hiss of the leaden-balled whip snatched the words from his mouth. But the whip was being wielded in the other room. His German companion stood him up, manacled his wrists, and tied them to a ring set in the wall. Then he stood bound for an eternity, hearing only the hiss and crack of the whip and the nonhuman screams of a tortured five-year-old child. He tore at the manacles, unaware of the pain that he inflicted on himself in this vain effort to rescue his child.

The Inbel (Independent Belgian News Agency) report describing this scene in detail relates that at length the prisoner could endure no more. Above the cries of his daughter he shouted, in French and then in German: "For God's sake, stop! Stop! I'll talk!"

Eventually his shouts were heard. The child's shrieks had

stilled before the whip ceased rising and falling and the door between the rooms was closed. From the anguish of his heart the prisoner involuntarily sobbed his confession. Yes, he was a member of the White Brigade. He had blown up the bridge at Battice on September 22; he and two friends had set a dynamite charge at Chératte; three other men had bombed the Nagant factory; he had stood guard at Visé while his comrades had shot the secretary of the commune; he and all the rest had blown up the main lock of the Albert Canal.

"And who killed the Rexist chief, Marcel Rondoz, in Spa?" they asked him.

"I don't know that! It wasn't me! I swear it on the life of my child! I would tell you if I knew. I am a traitor," he accused himself, "but I can't stand any more! I beg you, let me die—but promise that you won't do anything more to the kid!"

The Germans laughed. "Who, us? It's the RAF that's cruel to children, not us. Who stabbed the German sentry at Fle-malle-Haute?"

"I helped," he cried hysterically. "But I didn't kill Rondoz."

Von Mallincroth entered from the room where the child had been lashed. "So you murdered our men, swine? And you want to die? You'll pay for your crimes first." Von Mallincroth nodded to the guards, who struck out with gun butts, knife handles, and fists. The prisoner's head was a bloody lump, his eyes closed by the swollen flesh around them.

"All right, all right, that's enough," von Mallincroth cried angrily. "Do you want to kill him?"

The prisoner was only a streaming, disordered heap on the floor. A soldier picked him up distastefully and tossed him into an ambulance. He was taken to the prison hospital, where he died that night, completing in a final delirium the confession that would doom his comrades.



The case was then submitted to the military tribunal in Liège. Armed with the confession of the tortured martyr—let no man who has not known his ordeal condemn him—the judges questioned the other prisoners separately, told one that another had accused him of this or that, and skillfully provoked involuntary counterdenunciations. On November 25, 1941, the tribunal read out its sentences. Louis Geys, artisan, born February 10, 1917; Robert Gendarme, electrician, born April 4, 1904; Lambert Pallen, miner, born November 26, 1914; Georges Bechout, postal clerk, born December 8, 1909; Georges Godisseur, electrician, born April 14, 1908; Jules van de Walle, mason, born June 18, 1901; Jean de Renty, technician, born April 22, 1900; Guillaume Hocke, quartermaster general of police, born April 3, 1903, and Arthur Coene, notary, were condemned to die.

The trial continued into December for a few others; then the tribunal ordered that Albert Thion, Richard van de Walle, Ernest Omer, Jean Verval, François Medart, and—again—Arthur Coene be put to death. These new names had been revealed by the father of the lashed child in his dying delirium.

Coene, the notary, had been deemed the leader of both groups. The first group had committed systematic sabotages and recruited Communist experts for this purpose. These men, whom the suborned press described as "Albert Canal gangsters," had had their headquarters in Liège, at the Pot d'Or. The second group consisted of patriots of Tilleur, the suburb where Coene lived, and Flemalle-Haute who had concealed arms and explosives.

Baron Keim, the German governor of the province, announced officially that the military court had condemned fifteen men to death. But in order that the Walloon community might recognize the mercy and the good will that tempered German justice, he would suspend the execution of the sentences conditionally. The governor exploited his

sentimental chicanery to the full. The men condemned to death would not be executed if their fellow citizens and kinsmen behaved themselves; they would answer, not for their own crimes, but for the patriotism of all Belgians.

The reply to this was an explosion at the mine of Montegnée, followed the next day by a poster that read:

The methods and implements used in this latest outrage demonstrate that the criminals enjoyed local assistance. Consequently a number of miners and residents of Montegnée have been taken as hostages. The most drastic penalties will be imposed on them if the actual perpetrators have not been surrendered within five days.

KEIM, Major General  
Commanding

Neither the threat nor the promise of large rewards brought about the discovery of the saboteurs. Keim still held the winning card, however. Though he dared not execute the Montegnée hostages, he had in his disposition fifteen lives that he had snatched from the firing squad. The men had been duly condemned to death; with them he hoped to achieve his end and crush resistance.

Early in the morning of December 15, 1941, sleep in the working-class section was shattered by a tremendous explosion. A dynamite bomb had shattered the power lines between Bressoux and Chératte. That night von Falkenhausen telephoned Keim from Brussels and ordered vigorous retribution. The next day's papers prominently displayed a notice from the Kommandatur:

If the criminals have not been arrested by midnight of December 27, Arthur Coene, whose execution has been postponed, will be executed and the provisional pardon granted to Guillaume Hocke will be revoked.

Early in 1942, then, the Belgian radio in London dedicated a memorial program to the murdered men. Coene had died

without a word. Of Guillaume Hocke, the narrator told this story:

"Attached to the Seraing police, he was arrested on July 17, 1941, on a charge of having participated in acts of sabotage. He was tortured at first by the Gestapo, which sought to force him to name accomplices. But he said nothing.

"Then Hocke appeared before a German court-martial. The presiding judge, Rosska, treated him as a 'terrorist.' Guillaume Hocke, a servant of his country's law who had spent his life in insuring respect for it, smiled when he heard himself called a 'terrorist.'

"Hocke, who was born in Moresnet, knew German fluently. Rosska questioned him in that language, but he would not reply. He would defend himself only in French. This was no gesture of bravado: Hocke, like all real heroes, had no desire for gestures. But he wanted to be questioned in French in order that his codefendants might understand his answers and govern their own accordingly.

"Hocke was sentenced to death. He spent five months in a tiny cell in the citadel of Liège. Christmas passed, and Hocke, a bachelor, thought of his widowed mother beside her cold hearth in Marcinelle.

"Hocke could not know that at Bressoux-Chératte an electric power cable that had been supplying power to northwest Germany since the occupation had been destroyed. He could not know that General Keim had published, on December 18, a threat to shoot two condemned men.

"These men were Arthur Coene and the policeman, Guillaume Hocke. But the low trick was unavailing. The saboteurs were not betrayed.

"On the evening of December 27, Guillaume Hocke was told that he would be executed the following day. He was going to die, at thirty-eight. All he had in the world were his watch and a few little possessions. To a friend he left his pipe.

"He wrote to his superior officer. Do not think that he wrote grand phrases or wrapped himself in his heroism. He took his leave simply of his officer and of his colleagues who had done what they could to lighten his imprisonment. He asked his officer to see that the payments from the police benefit fund were made to his

mother. Having attended to material matters, he wrote above his signature: *'Vive la Belgique!'*

"Dawn of December 28 came—a gray, cold winter dawn. Guillaume Hocke insisted on putting on his old uniform and refused to have his eyes covered. He wanted to die as a soldier.

"Coene had already fallen. Hocke, standing at attention, faced the Germans squarely. Three of them were pale and trembling. A dirty business!

"The prison chaplain spoke for a moment; then he left Hocke and stood behind the firing squad, holding aloft his crucifix. And Guillaume Hocke fell, crying: *'Vive la Belgique!'*"

In Brussels, meanwhile, the tide kept rising. German army cars were damaged or destroyed; their contents were stolen. Near the royal palace of Laeken a German soldier was killed. The usual investigation was initiated, with the usual results. The Oberfeldkommandatur then caused the posting of a new notice:

Inasmuch as the inquiry into the murder committed in the park of Laeken on the person of a member of the German army has been vain, twelve prominent persons of Greater Brussels have been arrested as hostages. They include formerly active political figures whose anti-German tendencies in the past point to the possibility of their involvement.

The posters were put up early in the evening. Throughout the night police squads patrolled the streets, charged with preventing the mutilation of the posters. Toward dawn two patrolmen in the Auderghem Road noticed a man lying on the sidewalk beneath one of the announcements. On investigation they found that rigor mortis had already set in. There was a bullet hole in the temple.

A flashlight showed the policemen a huge V cut in the overcoat that still covered the body. Pinned to the lapel was a piece of cardboard headed by another V. Beneath the symbol were two lines of carefully printed letters:

No traitor can escape the White Brigade.

The slain man's pockets yielded an identity card in the name of Alfred Fervin.

The Liège brigadier left for France at noon.

## VIII

IT WAS from Georges Deckers' widow that Freeman and Buchet learned the incredible story of the man who was to become a symbol of the impassioned resistance of his compatriots.

When Deckers came back from France in 1940, his confidence in an ultimate Allied victory unshaken by all that he had seen, he was bitterly hurt that he could not continue the war from England. The remark that he had made to Buchet on their way back to Brussels was born of an unquenchable patriotism: "If one can't fight on the battlefield, one will have to fight under it."

From the beginning of organized resistance Deckers was a part of it. Himself an officer who had fought in the other war, he devoted himself without rest to assisting the escape of trapped English soldiers and of Belgians who wanted to rejoin their army in Britain. But he soon recognized that his country and the nature of the Germans' war demanded something more of him.

Thus Deckers applied for and got a job as department manager in a factory whose owners had been turned out by the Germans, who had converted it to war production. Within a month the director of the factory saw that production had fallen off by thirty per cent. The Kommandatur was harsh in its reproaches and ended by sending the man back to the front.

His successor was a Sudeten German who had worked for

Skoda and Konrad Henlein. For all his loyalty to Party and Fatherland, the factory's output continued to fall off, and he could not put his finger on the cause. A dozen times the workers were called together in vain efforts to persuade them to do their utmost to insure a German victory. When suasion and even the promise of extra pay brought no result and the new director saw himself following his predecessor, he decided to make an example by arresting the head of one of the factory's departments. But the example was not heeded. Guns were produced with astonishing delays.

Behind this was Georges Deckers, who had lost no time in finding the stronger-minded of the foremen under him and explaining to them the necessity for impeding production as much as possible without being caught. These men, of course, had friends in other departments to whom they spread the instruction. But there was no ordinary slow-down: output was cut gradually at first; then the men would complain that they could not work because they were hungry, or ill from sleeping in unheated homes. The Germans either could or would not remedy either condition, they knew.

Shortly before dawn one day Deckers arrived at the factory just as the night shift was leaving. For a brief moment the machines were stilled. Deckers was just hanging up his hat and coat when a messenger came to tell him that he was wanted at the head office. Arriving there, he found two tall men in civilian clothes.

"We have a warrant for your arrest," one of them said. "You've been watched for a week and you're slowing down the factory."

"I'm working at my usual pace," Deckers replied noncommittally.

He was taken, nevertheless, to the prison of Saint-Gilles and left there for four days. When his interrogation began he saw that the Germans had laid the groundwork well. The

exact daily production of his department had been recorded. "Not only have you held up production," his questioner remarked, "but you've been using scored steel."

"I never knew that!" Deckers exclaimed in genuine but pleased amazement.

"We're quite sure," the official said. "Your department's work is being analyzed now."

This first session was brief and almost courteous; a few more accusations were made, all of which Deckers denied, and he was sent back to his cell. There he remained for three days, until he was summoned once again. Wondering what to expect, he was stunned to be told that he was being released; there was no evidence of slow-down or of sabotage in his work.

Gaily he returned to his wife and children and to the factory where he had, he knew now, an unknown helper. But on the second day after his return to work he was called again to the director's office and met once more the two policemen who had taken him away before.

"What did you do before the war?" he was asked.

"I had a business of my own."

"Why did you change?"

"Because the war ruined me financially," Deckers answered, truthfully enough as far as he went. But the police were persistent.

"Why did you decide to get a munitions-plant job?"

"Because I know production and this is the kind that pays best."

There was a pause; then: "Were you in the other war?"

"Yes."

"Officer?"

"Yes—lieutenant."

"Precisely!" one of the policemen exclaimed triumphantly. "We have a file on you. You don't have to tell us that after

the war you were sent to the Ruhr with a special task and you were decorated later for a secret mission."

At the same moment that they were handcuffing Deckers a search party was going through his home while his family lay terrified on the floor under the muzzles of a half-dozen revolvers. In an unused fireplace the police found a cloth in which were wrapped an automatic pistol and several clips of bullets. This news was transmitted to Saint-Gilles Prison, where Deckers had already arrived, and was added to the rest of the evidence.

New elements unknown to Deckers had entered the situation. Two men, Jean Philippe and Paul Parin, had been arrested on similar charges, and Philippe, badgered and confused, had been made to admit that he had been in contact with the head of the underground in Brussels, whose name and address he could not recall. Parin said at a separate interrogation that he and Philippe had simply gone to spend a friendly evening with an old comrade, Georges Deckers. On this basis the Germans accused Deckers of leading organized sabotage of the German war effort. He was sentenced, first, to eight years in a labor camp for having given aid and comfort to the enemy and concealed weapons in his home, and, second, to death for sabotage.

The Germans believed that in Deckers they had the clue to the whole underground movement; that, as one of its responsible officers, he could give them full information on all its ramifications. He was therefore taken to Gestapo headquarters and received with considerable politeness.

"This is a tragic thing that has happened to you, my dear fellow!" he was told. "But I think we can help you to redeem yourself. You have only to sign a little paper and I myself"—the Gestapo official smiled persuasively—"will use all my influence with Falkenhausen. All you have to do is recognize our generous spirit: we don't ask you to betray your country; we know you're too honorable a man for that. All



we want is an honest admission of your activities, an earnest of your good faith."

Deckers refused to sign anything. For several days the Gestapo continued its persuasive technique, even filing a petition for clemency on his behalf. But it was denied, and the death sentence was affirmed.

Deckers received this news in his cell. He had already been apprised of other executions during his time in Saint-Gilles. Now he was to be next; his mind dwelt only on two things: the train of events that had brought him to the threshold of death and the greeting of his wife when he had been released from the prison before: "What would I have done if you hadn't come back?"

Against the background of the usual prison noises he wondered. His eldest son was seventeen; the other children were much younger. Surely they would come this evening to tell him that the night was his last. But at length he heard a church bell strike ten, and he knew he had another day to live.

This, he had thought, would be rapture. But the borrowed day was unbearable; he could hardly eat and he was glad when darkness came again. That evening, at eight o'clock, there was a knock at the door of his cell; it opened to admit the warder and two soldiers.

"Georges Deckers," the warder said solemnly, "I am charged to inform you that you are to be executed at dawn tomorrow. This is your last night. You have the right to write two letters that no one but the addressees will read and to order tobacco or liquor. In an hour the chaplain will visit you."

Deckers asked for paper and a pencil and wrote letters for his wife and his eldest son until the chaplain's arrival. But this, though the priest was an honest Belgian, brought him no comfort with the words of an unknown future that would be his in a few hours.

A little before dawn the warder broke his uneasy half doze to tell him that the time had come. Deckers stood up. Carefully he put the two letters on his bed under his wedding ring and the watch that he wanted his son to have. Then he went into the corridor, flanked by soldiers.

At the prison gate he was put into a barred truck from which he could see only a bit of palely lightening sky. The drive was long and apparently winding, but at last the truck stopped at the Tir National and Deckers was taken out of the vehicle. They led him to the wall and were about to cover his eyes, but he protested. He could see an orderly exercising a horse in the middle distance.

A German chaplain gave him the last rites and retired to kneel and pray behind the firing squad. The officer in command seemed nervous. "Aim for the heart," he told the men, "and fire at the word 'three.'"

Deckers heard the bolts of the rifles thrown in unison.

"*Ein!*"

The guns were raised to shoulder height.

"*Zwei!*"

Twelve sights seemed to converge on Deckers' eyes. This second was the longest that he had ever lived.

"Ground arms!"

Two men came forward and unbound Deckers, who was stupefied. Then a chill seized him and he felt his legs giving. They carried him into an office where two officers sat behind a table and helped him into a chair. Unbelieving, he heard one of the officers speaking in faultless French.

"You have come back from a terrible distance, Deckers. You have seen death. Now that you know that unspeakable last instant, spare your wife and children that knowledge! We know that you are at the heart of the underground, and we are merchants, pawnbrokers if you like. Redeem your life from us; it ought to be worth a little paltry knowledge

that we'll get sooner or later anyway. But here, have a little water first. Would you like a cigarette?"

Deckers swallowed the water avidly and refused the cigarette and an offer of brandy. The Germans gave him a minute to recover himself; then in a slightly less friendly tone the officer who had spoken before said: "Well?"

"I know nothing," Deckers replied with an effort. "And anyway, I'm not a merchant."

The officer rose sharply, strode round the table, and smartly slapped Deckers across the mouth. "Take the swine back!" he ordered the guards.

He was tossed into the rolling cage again. But he was not taken immediately to the prison; the truck stopped at Gestapo headquarters in the Avenue Louise, and for hours Deckers was compelled to stand erect while he was bombarded with questions. Though he was stunned by the nightmare day that he had spent and sweating profusely from nervous exhaustion, his will remained firm enough to reveal nothing.

At last he was returned to his cell. On the bed were the letters, the ring, the watch, as he had left them. Mechanically he put them away and lay down. His sleep that night was more exhausting than the day that had preceded it.

The following day he was ignored, save for the turnkeys who brought his food and took him to the exercise yard. Nor was he intruded on the day after that. Thus he spent a week in silence and inescapable reliving of that dawn at the Tir National.

Then he was taken back to the Gestapo, where he was badgered by relays of questioners until, after three hours of standing erect, he collapsed. Immediately he was revived and brandy was poured into his mouth. Then for a while he was treated kindly: helped into a chair, invited to smoke. The latter he still refused; he would take no favors from his enemies.

When kindness proved no more fruitful than torture, he was sent back to his cell. Hardly had he arrived there, it seemed, when the warder appeared to announce that he would be executed the next morning. The warder was followed by the Belgian chaplain.

Once again Deckers lived his "last" night—fitful dozing broken by a thousand contradictory images that he could not call thoughts, and ended by the death knell: the sound of the first streetcars. Once again Deckers left the letters on his bed under the ring and the watch.

At the Tir National the ground was the same nondescript color, the sky the same streaked gray. The same lieutenant stroked his mustache as he instructed the firing squad; the same German chaplain knelt behind the gunmen. Only the orderly with the horse was missing. Deckers wanted to be strong, but his heart was pounding. If only this time he would die!

"*Ein!*"

The guns went up and Deckers, his eyes again uncovered, straightened.

"*Zwei!*"

Twelve rifle barrels converged again on him. He hoped they were good marksmen.

"Ground arms!"

Deckers slumped in his bonds and almost fell when the men untied him. "In God's name get it over!" he screamed. "I've had enough, you bastards!" He could not stand; his entrails were filled with ice.

But he was back in the little office with the two officers. And now they would inflict on him the unbearable agony of words.

"Do sit down, my dear Deckers. You cannot say that we are ruthless even though you do seem to take advantage of our kindness. Come now, get a grip on yourself. I know it's no fun rubbing elbows with death like this. But don't forget,

thousands of our soldiers didn't have the chance to come back. Don't you think the soldiers that have been murdered by Belgians would have preferred to go on living? But we know how to pardon. Now why are you so stubborn? Why can't you follow Paul Colin or Léon Degrelle?"

"Never!" Deckers gasped, gripping the arms of his chair.

"'Never' is a long-term obligation"—the officer smiled—"lots of people find it hard to live up to. . . . You know, Deckers, you've changed terribly since I saw you last. I don't think you're so obstinate now. We can conquer human will power just as we conquer any other bad element."

And so for two hours the monologue went on, Deckers occasionally interrupting with a syllable full of hate. But he did not break, and he was sent back to his cell. There he stayed unmolested: one day, two days, ten days, a fortnight, until he was brought to the Gestapo again. Though he still denied, no physical torture except that of being compelled to stand erect was used on him.

Three days later he was told again that he would be executed at dawn. The same chaplain, the letters and the gifts, the ironically familiar death knell of the streetcars, the same Tir National, the monotony relieved this time by a drizzle. The lieutenant was the same man, but one of the riflemen had apparently been replaced. Deckers felt disembodied when they tied him to the wall; there was no physical sensation.

"*Ein!*"

Deckers felt a strange eddying within him, rising from his stomach.

"*Zwei!*"

The eddy broke forth from his numb lips in hysterical laughter that drowned out the final command:

"Ground arms!"

A stretcher was brought, and on it he was taken before

the two officers. "My poor Deckers!" his questioner exclaimed. "Why do you torture yourself so?"

But it was useless; it was like talking to a dead man, and Deckers had to be sent directly to his cell without the customary exhortations.

The next day he was ill. The prison doctor came and prescribed a sedative to break his fever. But even in his sleep Deckers could only count: "*Ein! . . . Zwei!*" But never "*Drei!*" Yet was there a "three"? No—but yet perhaps . . . No, he was still alive. Yet there had been a "three": three times that he had not been executed.

He spent a month in the prison hospital. In spite of himself he recovered; one day he could walk again, though he was hardly more than a miniature of his former self. But walking was painful, for it meant that he must open his eyes, and when he did that he wanted to close them again, to lie down and see nothing.

In all this time Deckers had had no word of his family or of his friends who were still fighting outside the prison. He knew nothing of the progress of the war, of the fate of England, the hope of Belgium. But then, he told himself, if peace had come he would be free. Once he opened his eyes in the hospital and caught a reflection of his transparent face: it frightened him and he knew that if he were freed his family would not know him.

Almost against his will Deckers grew physically stronger; his one purpose—never to yield—had never been impaired. When he seemed sufficiently recovered he was taken a fourth time to the Tir National. From the moment when he was led into the truck his nerves began to burn. Would he die or not? Was he condemned to live? He tried to smile his contempt of the firing squad, but the physical and moral effort was too great. He waited; the sentence was renewed and he was back in the little office.

"My dear fellow, you are your own worst enemy; you are

destroying yourself. Think of your own welfare." Then the questions began to rain on him.

Deckers made a fifth trip to the Tir National; he came back and made a sixth; he came back again. Seven times: "*Ein! . . . Zwei! . . . Ground arms!*" Eight times: "*Ein! . . . Zwei!*" but no "*Drei.*" For Deckers the punctuation of the seasons had been marked by the unbearable commands: the raw chill of autumn, the bleakness of winter, the warm gaiety of spring, the sensual heat of summer, and again the chill of autumn had meant to him only one thing: "*Ein! . . . Zwei! . . . Ground arms!*"

Thus far the German experiment in finding the limit of human mental endurance and its relation to the physical had brought no encouraging results. Other methods were introduced. Deckers' diet was cut. He became even thinner; he was subject to sudden fevers and, when he was taken to be questioned, he collapsed more frequently. But it seemed impossible to undermine his will power; even a ninth journey to and from the Tir National failed.

The tenth time that Deckers' execution was announced he was immediately taken to the visitors' room, where his wife was waiting. Mme. Deckers stared at the white-haired man with twisted lips and fiery eyes who was led in before her; then she burst into sobs. The widow of a living man left in tears.

At dawn the Germans introduced a certain variety in their procedure. Deckers was taken to the Tir National as usual, but instead of being led to the wall he was taken into the office where he had been questioned so many times before. His old acquaintance from the Gestapo was there.

"Look here, Deckers," he said; "you can avoid all this business easily enough. Tell me something about Lienaerts, or Hartveld, or the Jew Fogelbaum."

"I don't know any of them!"

"But I am sure that you know them all, and besides them

a leader who lives somewhere outside Brussels—he has an odd name. Just tell me where he lives.”

“I don’t know any of them,” Deckers insisted.

“That’s right,” the Gestapo officer said soothingly, “don’t accuse anyone. Just give me a hint. We do know that another of the leaders is called Cent; he used to call himself Souci. He’s been spotted in the Rue Lesbroussart. Souci and Cent are the same fellow, aren’t they?”

“Let me alone!” Deckers growled irritably. “I don’t know Souci; I don’t know Cent and I don’t give a damn about Cent or Souci or even Sans-Souci!”

Deckers went to the execution ground for the tenth time, and the Gestapo officer turned to one of his associates. “Well? Where are we getting?”

“Somewhere, sir. We always thought of Cent as in *centaine*; Deckers just let something slip when he said ‘Sans-Souci.’”

“Ach! like the palace of Frederick the Great?”

“Précisely, sir.”

They were silent, listening to the click of the rifles from without and the never-changing orders: “*Ein! . . . Zwei! . . . Ground arms!*”

What was taken back to Saint-Gilles that day was barely a man. For weeks Deckers was kept in the hospital, assiduously tended lest he die too soon. When the crisis was safely past he was told, in January, 1942, that he was to be sent on a long trip. The chaplain, who had been visiting him fairly often, told him that this was probably the end of his agonies. Deckers wrote his letters again.

He was called to the visitors’ room. His wife and his boy were there; they averted their eyes when he entered. Deckers had much to say; he stilled their greetings with the story of all that had happened to him.

“I’m being sent away,” he said, though he did not believe it; “probably to Germany; when they’re beaten I’ll see you



again. My son, I've done all I could; your place is in London as soon as you can get there. If anything happens to me you and your mother will get letters, and my watch is for you, Philippe. There's one thing I want you to do"—unconsciously he lowered his already almost inaudible voice—"tell Jean Buchet, who lives at 88 Rue Sans-Souci, that Cent must disappear."

Late in the morning of January 26, according to the account that appeared in the underground paper, *La Libre Belgique*, and was republished in May by the Inbel Agency, Georges Deckers was put into a truck and taken to Beverloo. The truck, on this eleventh trip, returned empty.

A few days later a woman in mourning rang Buchet's bell. Because the kitchen was the only warm room, he received her there.

"I am Madame Deckers," she said in a flat voice. "My husband asked me to warn you that Cent must disappear at once if he doesn't want to go through what my husband did."

"What do you mean, madame?"

Mme. Deckers told Buchet, as she had told Freeman, the whole story that her husband had told her, and added: "Last Thursday afternoon a Belgian policeman came to tell me I was a widow. He gave me a list of the things that Georges had left in the prison. I went there yesterday."

Her own sobs interrupted her for a moment; she regained her control and went on: "They aren't just murderers; they're grave robbers! The watch and the ring that I gave my husband when we were married are gone!"

## IX

ONCE MORE the White Brigade of Brussels had changed its meeting place, this time to the back room of a basement café on the Rue Weyemberg. A majority of the leaders had decided that Buchet, whose alias now was Avec (the antonym of his first, Sans), was to go to England, despite his violent objections, for he was becoming too well known to the Germans. Valentin, the young man who had introduced Buchet into the Brigade's work a year before, had since been sent to Antwerp to head the section there. Back briefly in Brussels, he was arranging for the departure of two of his men for England.

Freeman asked who they were. "One is a doctor called Pélican, for the street he lives on," Valentin said, "and the other is a close friend of his who got him into the movement, an insurance agent. They were both members of the Antwerp ice-hockey club."

"I'll bet that's my old friend Kraatz!" Chaudron exclaimed.

"I hadn't wanted his name mentioned," Valentin said dryly. "He's Lamorinière in the Brigade and van den Berg on his new identity card."

"How have things been going in Antwerp?" Freeman asked.

"Very well. We've got a strong section, well disciplined and with plenty of guts. We've gathered in a good many of the old Communist crowd from the water front, especially since the invasion of Russia. They know a good many German sailors, and most of the ships have Communist cells on them now."

"Good enough. But why are you so eager to get Pélican and Lamorinière out of the country?"

"Pélican killed a German soldier and he's wanted. Lamorinière hasn't done anything yet that the Germans know about, but he's impetuous and might get us all into trouble. He'll be better off in the army. Meanwhile, they're both hiding out in Antwerp, but it isn't safe there—the town's too small."

Most of the men knew Lamorinière, but they were curious about the doctor. Valentin explained that Pélican had been reluctant to engage himself with the Brigade at first; he confined his activities to taking care of the patients of his disfranchised Jewish colleagues and transmitting the fees to the former physicians on the basis of their own statements, as most of the Christian doctors in Belgium did after the Germans introduced their "racial" laws. Pélican also did a great deal of charity work among Jews in Antwerp.

One of these, a butcher named David Goldstein, had come to the doctor secretly one night after he had been unable to get anyone to treat his wife, who was dangerously ill. Pélican did not hesitate; he followed the Jew, wearing the Star of David on his arm band, but it was too late: he could only ease the woman's dying. What he could do, he did, and asked no fee.

A few days after the woman died her husband came again to Pélican's house, the Star of David on one arm, a mourning band on the other. Goldstein explained that he had bribed the German sergeant on duty in his street to let him have some beef and, in gratitude to the doctor, he wanted Pélican to come to his shop three days later, when the meat was due to arrive, and take as much as he wanted. It would be best, Goldstein said, to come just before dawn.

Touched by the butcher's gratitude, Pélican thanked him and said that he would appear at the appointed time. Early in the morning, then, he had gone to the butcher's shop,

above which were his living quarters, thinking nothing of the German patrol that he passed, even when he heard one of the soldiers chuckle: "We had a damn good time at the butcher's all right!"

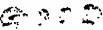
He remembered it, though, when he found the shop dark. But then German soldiers would not have visited a Jew for pleasure. Pélican opened the door—it was unlocked—and walked in. He called his friend and got no answer. The air was heavy with the odor of fresh meat and blood. Perhaps Goldstein was upstairs. Meanwhile he paced aimlessly up and down, until a shadowy mass caught his eye.

Something lay on the chopping block, with a placard on a stick driven into the mass. Leaning over and holding his nose at the stench, the doctor saw that the placard read, in German: "Strictly kosher." It was on a human torso.

Pélican recoiled in disbelief of his senses. He looked wildly around; a showcase arrested his glance. Pélican pressed against the glass and peered into its darkness, driven by an impulse that he could not define. In the darkness he made out a clothed leg—an arm—the grinning head of David Goldstein.

Physical disgust was vanquished in him by an uncontrollable hatred. He picked up a cleaver and went softly upstairs. If there was a German still in the house he would exact vengeance.

Moving noiselessly, Pélican approached the butcher's bedroom. Kneeling before a wall safe, the German sergeant was singing quietly in a drunken calm while he tried to figure out the combination.

Pélican moved like a machine. He crept up carefully behind the German, gripped the cleaver with both hands, raised it to full arm's length, and brought it down on the German's skull. 

Pélican made his way home, stupefied by his own actions, and bathed carefully, as if to cleanse himself of the scene

that he had witnessed and participated in. He changed his clothes and went to seek out Lamorinière, to be enlisted in the White Brigade.

It was these two men whom Valentin had ordered into hiding until he could arrange for their departure. On his return to Antwerp from Brussels he went directly to Brigade headquarters. "Have you seen Lamorinière and Pélican?" he asked the man whom he found there.

"They went to the Palais des Sports for the hockey game. They said they were fed up with staying in all the time."

"The idiots!" Valentin exclaimed. "Lamorinière particularly should have known better; he's played on every rink in Europe, and the Germans'll certainly know his face if they see it."

Several thousand persons were in the arena to see the Brussels-Antwerp game. Pélican and Lamorinière occupied part of a box at the rink; Carlos, the captain of the Brussels team, skated up to the barrier for a greeting before the game began.

Outside, at the ticket turnstile, two darkly clad men were stopped by an usher. "*Deutsche Polizei!*" they said curtly, and one showed his card: "Bruno Arndt, S.S. Hauptscharführer und Kriminal Oberassistent." The usher let them pass, thinking to himself that there were a dozen German plain-clothes men already in the house.

Scattered among the crowd, the Germans watched the game and the spectators. Pélican and Lamorinière had supposed that the police would look for them at the hockey match and had chosen their conspicuous seats on the theory that the police would expect them to hide in the more popular cheap seats in the gallery.

The first period of the game passed without incident. But neither Pélican nor Lamorinière was surprised when, in the excitement that attended the scoring of a goal by the

Antwerp team, a hand tapped Lamorinière on the shoulder and a firm voice said: "Would you step outside a moment?"

"Who are you?" Lamorinière asked without turning around.

"Arndt, Kriminal Oberassistent."

Lamorinière looked back then. The man had his right hand in his coat pocket. "No tricks," the German warned, "or I'll shoot. Your friend will be good enough to come with us."

Lamorinière and the doctor rose, unnoticed by the excited spectators. As they went out into the aisle, followed by the German, some girls rushed to take the excellent seats that they had vacated and came between the group and the German police waiting at the head of the aisle. There were two sudden sharp shots and Arndt collapsed on one of the girls.

Everyone leaped up to see what was happening; Lamorinière and Pélican slipped up the aisle, twisted and turned among rows of seats, and made for the galleries as Arndt howled with pain. The man who had accompanied Arndt at the turnstile shouted an order, and the German soldiers who were in the place poured onto the rink, stopping the game. The German police and soldiers at once organized a search for the two Belgians.

An order to clear out the spectators was given. First the lower levels were evacuated, then the balconies, and finally the galleries. Lamorinière and Pélican crouched behind a row of seats. As the crowd left the Germans deployed to trap the two Belgians.

Not a dozen yards from where they crouched one German soldier climbed onto a seat to inspect the galleries better. A revolver shot rang out and he fell hastily and awkwardly. Pélican began to crawl to another section, but he had to cross an aisle where there was a break in the seats; despite his haste a bullet caught him in the side.

"So long, Kraatz!" he called weakly as he rolled over. "*Vive la Belgique!*"

Kraatz did not reply. He crouched lower behind the seats as he heard the shouts of the Germans. Arndt had been taken out to an ambulance and there was some question of using tear bombs to force the lone Belgian to give up. Random shots splattered around him as Germans posted themselves at all the gallery exits.

Kraatz fired sparingly, only when he felt sure of having a good target; then for a long interval he did not shoot at all. He waited tensely for another good opportunity to fire; then he shrieked out involuntarily as a ricocheting bullet caught his kneecap. His arm flew up and the gun dropped into the next row of seats.

Now that he was disarmed, the Germans closed in at once. Two or three of them dragged him out into the aisle while another battered him with a gun butt.

Valentin, reading the *Volk en Staat* next day, learned exactly what had happened. The Germanized paper displayed the story prominently on its front page in these terms:

The Antwerp Velodrome was the tragic scene of a Jewish-Communist outbreak last night. The Gestapo had been looking for K. W. Kraatz, a dangerous British agent, for some time. Two members of the Black Brigade spotted him at the hockey match with another criminal who has not yet been identified. ~~Hauptscharführer~~ Bruno Arndt and a German soldier were killed in heroically defending themselves against the assassins. The unidentified man was also killed, and Kraatz was captured after he had been disabled by a wound in the knee.

Two days later Buchet received a brief note from Valentin, who had sent it by messenger to the Brussels headquarters. It read:

DEAR AVEC:

You have no doubt seen the papers. Remove Nos. 12 and 17 from your exit list.

Buchet took the paper home with him. Waiting for his dinner, he read it again and again. Once his wife passed through the room and looked over his shoulder. She said nothing then, but when they were eating she began, hesitantly at first, then gaining courage and speaking more rapidly.

"Jean," she pleaded, "I haven't said anything till now. But you have a little daughter. I can't help feeling that they're catching up to you—I just know it. You must stop. You know how much I love you. And think of Anne!"

Buchet said nothing, but he was eating more slowly.

"I didn't say anything before," Denise Buchet continued, "because I didn't want to frighten you for nothing, but I've seen one of our neighbors watching this house awfully closely for several days."

"Who?" Buchet demanded.

"Schumacker, the Boche across the street."

Buchet hummed tunelessly. "Maybe you're right," he said at last. "But I won't give up what I'm doing. I'll find another field of operations. There's one gap, at least, in the next group leaving for England."

Denise laid down her fork and got up. Coming round the table to her husband's chair, she kissed him lightly on the forehead.

"I don't want you to be a coward, my dearest. But you must think of us too. And you can do your job from England—even if I don't see you again till it's all over!" she ended with a sob.



## X

BUCHET had helped a number of men to escape from Belgium, but he himself was reluctant to follow them, by whatever route. It was not that he felt that the dangers of flight were any greater than those that he faced daily in Brussels, but he did not want to leave either his family or his work in the country itself.

One of the men whom Buchet had helped was Emile Borman, a teacher in the coastal town of La Panne. Borman had been captured during the fighting in 1940 and, soon after his repatriation, he had joined the White Brigade, trying to mask his activities in his daily task of teaching school and supporting his wife and their two children. He was extremely active in the underground.

Borman set out by bicycle one day to accomplish a mission for the organization. He had not been gone long when a German police squad came to his house. The leader strode in to ask Mme. Borman where her husband was.

"He's been away for two days," Mme. Borman said, "trying to find some food for us around Aeltre. We have two hungry children and a third coming."

"You are under house arrest," the German replied. "It is forbidden to go out."

Mme. Borman saw from her window that the German was deploying his men in a fashion to intercept her husband on his return. She tried to calm her thoughts and find some way of warning him in advance. Then she remembered that in one corner of the cellar one could quite clearly hear any movement made in the adjoining house; she posted her elder daughter there with instructions to call her as soon as she heard anything.

Exactly at noon the child called her and Mme. Borman rushed downstairs. She knocked on the wall several times with a hammer. Her neighbor called to ask what was the matter.

"Come close to the wall, Auguste." Mme. Borman explained what had happened and urged the man to give the alarm to the principal of her husband's school. Within a half-hour members of the White Brigade were posted on all the roads that Borman might possibly take.

"I was stopped by one of our group," Borman said later in England (still later, a sergeant in the Belgian army, he told the story before the microphones of two New York radio stations), "and told that the game was up. So I turned round at once and made off in the direction of Brussels by devious routes. As I was approaching the city my machine broke down and I had to abandon it and continue on foot. When I arrived I found one of my friends, who hid me in his house, where I had to stay for some time while he arranged to provide me with forged papers that made me out to be a Frenchman with another name. I was supposed to be proceeding to Bilbao in Spain to join a ship for South America on business for the Liebig Company."

Buchet sent Borman to cross the border near Thionville; he then went down to Commercy, the end of the first stage. In a week he was in Lyons, where he had to wait six weeks to start the trip into Spain. But he fell into the hands of the Vichy police, who sent him back to Belgium. At Quévy, however, he managed to escape from the train and, after an arduous journey on foot, he reached La Panne again.

Later, Buchet was to learn, Borman had finally made his way to England by boat. But his experiences in France showed how unlikely it was that anyone could succeed by that route. Buchet thought of another escape attempt in which he had had a part. In the beginning of 1941 Lefèvre—L'Anglais—had introduced him to a young man named

Alfred Vogels, who had helped to rescue Englishmen stranded in Flobecq. Vogels had discovered, while staying with a friend in Waereghem, where the Germans had recently built an airfield, that very often the Germans left their planes on the field all night, loaded with fuel and ready for instant use. He proposed to steal a machine and fly it to England. But for this purpose several men would be needed, including at least one skilled airman.

Little by little a group was formed, consisting of Clemenceau, Molenbeek, Defacqz, Gérance, Demolder, Flobecq, and one or two more. Behind these aliases were Fogelbaum, Ghislain, Hartveld, Heymans, Mottard, and Vogels. In pairs they made trips to the airfield to acquaint themselves with the terrain. The plane and ground crews had a dormitory close to the runways, but there was only one sentry.

When the climactic night came they met on a road near the airfield. If they were captured, they agreed, they would say that their only intention had been to steal food from the airmen's quarters for their families.

Vogels led them deviously into the field. A bell struck eleven as they crossed a little brook. Buchet fingered the revolver in his pocket, regretting that he would be the only one of them all to remain on the ground; it was a long time since he had flown. The others pressed on; Buchet took up a post where, if the need arose, he could dispose of the German sentry.

Suddenly a dog began to bark. Lights flashed on and, as their beams swung over the field, Buchet saw his friends throw themselves flat. German soldiers trotted over the field, rifles in their hands.

Hearing their shouts, Buchet knew that the Belgians were trapped. There was nothing more that he could do. He turned and fled, stumbling through the brook, back to the road. He walked hastily, ducking into the shadow of the trees when he heard the hum of a bicycle's tires behind him.

The German on it rode past without turning, then stopped at some building, the nature of which Buchet could not distinguish, and ran inside. Buchet increased his pace.

When he had reached the building he seized the bicycle, mounted, and pedaled for Roulers, where he had a reliable friend. There he was safe. But the others, he learned from the newspapers the next day, had all been taken, and patrols were looking for one man who had escaped. That would be himself, he knew, and he remained four days at Roulers.

Now, as he mused on these past events, he was interrupted by his wife's entry into the dining room, where he preferred to sit when at home, for it was far enough from the door to give him time to size up any visitor.

"There's an awfully pretty girl here to see you, Jean," Denise said. "She says you don't know her but to tell you Defacqz sent her."

The coincidence startled him. He was wary, however, of some attempt to trap him. He sent his wife back to tell the visitor that he knew nothing of any Defacqz and could not see her. But in a minute Mme. Buchet was back with a little packet in her hand.

"She's very insistent, Jean. She says her name is Regine Mouraux and she asked me to show you this to refresh your memory."

Buchet took the packet, which consisted of several letters. The envelopes bore the stamp of the censor of Saint-Gilles Prison. He opened the first one and read:

DEAREST REGINE:

You must forgive me for having introduced this irritant into our love. But our country comes first. I have done nothing very serious; at the very worst they will hold me until the war is over. And then we shall be married the very day that I am released! Meanwhile, you can visit me. . . .

Buchet skipped the rest to look for the signature. It was simply: "Adelin." That was Hartveld's—Defacqz's—first name, and the hand certainly seemed to be his. Buchet turned to his wife. "All right, Denise, bring her in."

The visitor was as pretty as Mme. Buchet had said she was, but her face was marked with strain.

"Monsieur Buchet," she began in a tense voice, "I am engaged to Adelin Hartveld. As you know, he has been in prison almost a year, and I've seen him a few times—the latest was last week. It is very bad for them. Adelin said he was sure that all the rest, like himself, said the same thing whenever they were questioned: that they'd been looking for food in the fliers' quarters. But there were some questions, too, he told me, about someone named Souci, whom you probably know better than I." She paused, and Buchet looked up, blinking as if he did not understand. Hartveld, of course, would have no means of knowing that his name had been changed.

"Yes," Mlle. Mouraux went on steadily, "Souci; but, fortunately for you—you see, I knew a good bit of Adelin's affairs—no one talked. That is, not until this fall. Now Adelin is sure that one of the men turned traitor; that's why, when I saw him last week, he asked me to talk to you or La Hulpe."

"Who is La Hulpe?" Buchet was still being cautious.

"The man who lives across the street from Dr. Bratt."

"You're quite well informed." Buchet smiled. "I suppose I needn't be afraid of you any longer—either you're on the level or you know so much that it doesn't matter. Go on."

"How many men were arrested with Adelin?"

"Let me see now: six or eight, I think; I was the only one to get away. There were Fogelbaum, Ghislain, Heymans, Mottard, Vogels——"

"I think you're mistaken. Vogels never spent a day in jail," the girl said sharply.

"What do you mean?" Buchet shot out the question.

"He was the *provocateur*," Mlle. Mouraux went on. "Don't interrupt me, please; I will tell you what Adelin told me. As late as November no specific charge had been made against Adelin and the rest. But then they were all accused of having tried to steal an airplane. And then they were confronted with a witness who hadn't appeared before: Vogels. But he was going under the name of Alfred Farin of Lessines. That's all Adelin told me, and he wanted me to tell you at once."

Buchet had paled while she was speaking. This was the second time that a Gestapo agent had tried to sneak into their ranks: the first time had been a failure, when Fervin was killed after he had betrayed only one group. But Farin had turned in several men and knew all the rest; he could do far more harm. Buchet made Mlle. Mouraux promise not to tell anyone what she had told him.

The danger from Farin was the greater in that violent acts of resistance were steadily increasing. And undoubtedly this fact would influence the determination of the fate of Hartveld and the others when their trial was held.

Léon Degrelle and Staf Declercq, respectively Walloon and Flemish traitors "by appointment," tried to repair their waning prestige with the Germans by organizing anti-Communist meetings and forcing their followers into a "volunteer" legion to fight in Russia. One afternoon a sorry-looking group that had yielded to their words was marching to the station to entrain when a hand grenade burst among them, wounding several.

Another time Valentin returned from Antwerp to help the work of the illegal press by assassinating the chief of the suborned papers, Paul Colin. Valentin ambushed the bought editor as he was garaging his car—a gift, incidentally, from his German masters. But Valentin was acting alone with too

little time to prepare his plan, and he missed entirely. Colin, however, saw that the ambush was reported in all his papers.

Though a great part of Belgium's German garrison had been withdrawn to the eastern front, the country was almost starving. The food went with the Germans. Mme. Buchet, who knew that soon her husband must leave for England—a project that was being accelerated by the inquiries that Schumacker, their neighbor, was always making in the street about Buchet—insisted on strengthening him for the trip by cutting her own meager rations. As a result, she became ill, coughing violently. But her constitution was strong, and she seemed to throw off her attack soon enough. The little girl, however, who had fallen ill about the same time, could not recover so quickly. Medical examination disclosed that she had an incipient tuberculosis—a common enough condition among Belgian children under the occupation. But Mme. Buchet did not dare reveal this to her husband.

The starving population stole food when it could, and some members of it stole other things. One night a violent explosion shook the area from the Bois to the Porte Louise. A cache of dynamite had been carefully set in a garage belonging to the Wielemans Ceuppens Brewery next to the Gestapo headquarters in the Avenue Louise, and its blast shattered the whole ground floor of Himmler's Belgian headquarters.

Unfortunately for Hartveld and the other prisoners—to whom had been added Jules Lienaerts, inspector of police, and several others arrested on various charges—the explosion occurred on the eve of their trial. The first group was sentenced to death on January 19, 1942; the others a few days later.

Hartveld, whose promising career at the Bar had been interrupted when it was barely begun, had written the previous May to his aunt in Brussels, in a letter to be forwarded to his parents in New York (they had fled the in-

vasion at his urgings, while he remained behind in the army of his country):

I am very glad that you have established contact with my parents. I have complete confidence in the future and hope that in a year or two I shall be able, reunited with my family and married to Regine, to resume the defense of the widow and the orphan.

If Mother weeps, she should think of the mothers of all my comrades killed at the front. I have done my duty as my conscience dictated. There are times when *country* must take precedence even over family. It is because the Germans know this that they have won so many victories.

My dear parents, dominate your emotions, learn courage and patience. *Every anguish has its end*. You must not become soft. Fortunately, I am tough. It is more than a year since I have seen you. How eagerly I look forward, Father, to the day when we shall meet again!

"Every anguish has its end." His would end soon enough; the night before his execution he wrote his last letter (which, like the preceding one, was later published in *Message*, the Belgian organ in England):

I have just been informed that my sentence has been sustained on appeal. I shall be shot tomorrow morning. I am particularly concerned to have you know that I have lost neither my calm nor my courage and that I am firmly resolved to keep them to the end. I am neither afraid nor anguished and, when the time comes, I promise you that I shall walk out without trembling.

I ask you to be brave and not to give in to useless despair. When you read this, everything will have ended for me.

It will be a great help in my going if I know that you will be strong and continue to live as you used to. I shall not be quite dead, for I shall live in your hearts; try to believe that I have gone, as I used to do, on some long journey and that one day, perhaps, we shall meet again. Promise that you will not weaken, that you will go on along the road of life as firmly as I shall take another road tomorrow. And forgive as I do.



At dawn Hartveld and his companions were shot one after another. A few days later, Lienaerts and four more men fell before the guns. The Germans tossed the bleeding bodies into an open-bodied truck for delivery to the cemetery of Ixelles.

There was some delay before the locked gates. A crowd had assembled and knelt around the grisly vehicle, praying for the souls of those who had put their country first. Then the gate opened and the truck entered the burial ground. There was no shout from the kneeling throng; there were only sobs.

In that place and on that day Belgium's history rolled back almost four hundred years to another scene of horror and solemnity. While the truck had stood, the blood of its cargo had dripped to the street; the truck rolled away, and all that remained of the heroism of these men was a red puddle on the cold stones.

Then the praying people rose and came forward; knelt again and, almost with awe, dipped their handkerchiefs in the sacred blood—blood no longer of any one man, blood of a nation united, in anguish or in death, before the enemy. Unconsciously these Belgians of 1942 were one with the Belgians of 1575 who, in the Great Square of Brussels, solemnly dipped their kerchiefs in the blood of d'Egmont and de Hornes, martyrs to the Spanish tyrant Alba.

This was the tribute of the lowly. But it was not the only tribute. *Justice Libre*, the illegal organ of the Brussels Bar, gave its homage to the heroes who had carried their duty as defenders of the right to the ultimate:

The list of the thirteen martyrs whose death, while it grieves us irreparably, is still the guaranty of the restoration of our liberties contains, we learn with sorrow, the names of two lawyers who, according to our information, were guilty of the desire to go to England.

As chance would have it, both were Jews; as such, they had been forbidden by the Germans to practice their profession. This in-

famous prohibition served only to increase our appreciation of them.

It is a source of pride to us that, thanks to a firm resolve, the lists of the Bar, from which the oppressor wanted their names erased, have not been sullied by such a sacrilege. Had the Bar bowed before the Germans' threats, its members would today have considered such submission an irremovable stain on their honor.

It is with the most profound admiration that we, the lawyers of Brussels, claim Fogelbaum and Hartveld as members of our Bar.

It was while Buchet sat reading this tribute that his wife at last confessed to him that their daughter had a lesion in her lung. The emotion already stirred in him by the courage of his friends broke under this new augmentation and he sobbed like a child.

The next day he visited the graves at Ixelles. The Germans had prohibited the decoration of the graves, but a score of anonymous crosses had been erected over these and older tombs. The names of all their occupants were known to Buchet without an inscription: Hartveld, Fogelbaum, Lefèvre, Heymans, Mottard, Lienaerts, Ghislain, Wiesenberg, Libion, and all the rest. Despite the German order, there were a few little flowers on some of the mounds; Buchet added his own.

That night Alfred Farin, the Rexist traitor, was shot four times in the stomach. His body was left where it had fallen, until the Germans carted it away. On that sidewalk, too, a little pool of blood remained—and the Belgians who passed by the next day turned away in disgust.

## XI

NEWS OF GERMAN REVERSES in Russia and of America's entry into the war had not lightened the winter for the people of Belgium. Their houses were cold and their stomachs were empty. More than half the children in the country had tuberculosis. Spring came almost unnoticed, save that the chill in the houses slowly lessened. It brought the realization of the long-discussed departure of Buchet for England.

He went for the last time to a Brigade meeting, this time in the Rue Froissart. Valentin was there again from Antwerp, and Joseph de Smet, the only member of the Ghent section who had escaped a police foray. Buchet's imminent leave-taking had made them all meditative.

"I sometimes wonder," Chaudron said, scribbling idly with a pencil while they waited for the 9 o'clock BBC broadcast to Belgium, "what keeps us going, living to destroy and destroying to be destroyed."

"It isn't anything you can define," Freeman answered. "It's like electricity: when you feel it you know what it is. It's something that the simplest man knows—that life is the price we pay in this market. It isn't right—it's like dung heaps: a lot is needed to get the harvest in."

"I don't know," said Marin, a delegate from Mons, as he took his pipe out of his mouth. "Resistance is rolling up a surplus, so to speak, all over. It's not divisible; it's like a huge balance sheet with credits and debits. America's been paying out since Pearl Harbor. England's been paying, like us, for two years. And if we don't make up our own defaults we'll be the bankrupts of democracy!"

The talk was stilled for the broadcast; when it was over there were other things to discuss. Valentin had brought to

the meeting a young lawyer, who remarked that he had been in touch with Regine Mouraux, Hartveld's fiancée. "She is inconsolable," he said. "She wants only to avenge him and she wants to join us."

The matter was referred to later consideration. Freeman took the floor.

"All messages for England must be brought in by tomorrow at the latest. The group that's leaving will meet at the Café des Roses, in Rhode, under Buchet. They start at dawn the day after tomorrow."

"I shall have to go," Valentin interrupted. "The last train for Antwerp leaves at ten-thirty—unless they've cut it out again as they've done for the past week."

"If you miss it you can stay with me," Buchet offered.

"Thanks. But I hope I'll make it. I probably shan't see you again, Avec—so I'll say so long. Remember when we met, almost two years ago? It looks a lot better now. I envy you going to England—maybe we'll meet there one day. Take it easy, old boy."

Buchet was embarrassed and could only mutter a farewell.

Denise was waiting for him when he reached home. "I'm glad you're going, darling," she said. "Not for myself; for you. It's too hot here for you. Schumacker was asking about you again in the cigar store today."

She was interrupted by the coughing of the child from above. Buchet's eyes clouded. "I hate to leave you and the kid. Anyway, you'll have an extra ration card for her and yourself. Don't say anything about my going away."

"Let me get your things ready." She rose.

"Good idea. I'll take my bag to Rhode tomorrow afternoon."

The evening was a painful one. Little more was said, but that night Buchet knew his wife was sobbing beside him. He could not comfort her.

The day that followed was fittingly dark and damp. Neither Denise nor Jean had much to say. In midmorning the bell rang; it was Madame Offenberg.

"I thought you might be able to give my husband a message in England," she said hesitantly. "I heard you were going."

"Yes, but please keep it quiet." Buchet turned to Denise. "You know Madame Offenberg—her husband was the pilot on the last flight I made in the war. He's in England."

"Of course," Denise said. "You must come often, Madame Offenberg—we shall have something to talk about together."

After lunch Buchet, carrying his suitcase, went out with his wife, who walked with him to the tram. On the way they passed the grocer in his white apron. "Going away, I see, Monsieur Buchet," the tradesman observed.

"Just a short business trip." Buchet was annoyed at the man's curiosity. Denise left him at the tram. He took the bag to the café in Rhode, left it with the barman, who could be trusted, and returned home for dinner.

"Everything's set," he informed his wife. "Freeman will bring me the reports tomorrow. I'll be getting up pretty early, you know. I'll write from Charleroi, dear."

Denise said nothing. She ate little; when she had finished they cleared away and sat together in the living room, not speaking; occasionally their hands met and clung. Buchet was almost ready to go to bed when the bell rang.

"You answer," he told his wife. "I'm going up to the attic. If it's anyone suspicious, say I went away today to get food for the kid. Whatever happens, don't change your story. If it's nothing, then come upstairs and sing any little song."

"Kiss me!" she demanded as he started upstairs. He turned, embraced her swiftly, and went on, while she went to the vestibule. Near the top of the stairs he paused to watch. Denise opened the door and a shadow blocked the space.

"Buchet there?" a tense voice asked.

"No. Who are you?" Her voice was equally tense.

"Valentin. From Antwerp. I was hoping Buchet could put me up. I missed my train."

Buchet recognized the voice and started downstairs. "O.K., Denise, bring him in."

Mme. Buchet had to cling to Valentin's arm; she almost collapsed into a chair. Valentin explained that his train had been taken off again the previous night and tonight; the previous night he had stayed with Freeman, but he did not want to excite suspicion in the neighborhood by returning.

"I'm sorry, Jean," he added. "I know you're going away tonight. But I had no choice. Can you let me stay till morning? I'll sleep on the couch."

"Certainly. We were just going up. Make yourself at home."

Denise and Jean left Valentin in the living room. For a long time they stood beside Anne's bed, listening to the child's harsh breathing. Buchet wanted to kiss her in farewell, but he feared that he might wake her. He passed his hand lightly over her hair and led his wife to their room.

Neither of them slept. Buchet lay on the bed fully clothed, for he could not afford any loss of time in the morning. His wife sobbed intermittently beside him, occasionally trying to master herself to say that she knew that he must go, that she wept only for herself and blamed herself for it.

At the sound of the first streetcar they got up. Valentin was already stirring in the living room. Denise went into the kitchen to prepare something for her husband to eat and offered Valentin breakfast, but he refused. He was too eager to get back to Antwerp; he would buy something and eat it on the way.

As he went up the street he saw the grocer opening his shop and turned in. But the grocer insisted that he had nothing to sell.

"You must have something," Valentin insisted. "You don't let people starve around here, do you?"

"All I have on hand right now is turnips."

"All right, let me have a bunch."

He paid and left. He had barely started up the street when two men in civilian clothes stopped him. "One minute, Buchet!"

Valentin understood at once. "What the hell is this?" he shouted as loud as he could, hoping that Buchet would hear him and be warned. Indeed, Buchet ran to the living-room window and lifted a slat of the drawn blinds to see.

"*Deutsche Polizei!*" he heard the men tell Valentin. "Aren't you Jean Buchet?"

Buchet was shaking. He could see his neighbor, Schumacker, on the opposite sidewalk.

"Go lock the door!" he called to Denise. Looking out the window again, he could see a number of men in front of the house. Schumacker had crossed the street and was apparently informing the police of their mistake. As he saw Valentin being led away he heard scrapings at his own lock.

"Come up to the attic with me, Denise," he said. As they ran up the stairs he explained that he would lock himself in with a duplicate key. She was to hide the other key and go downstairs. "Remember," Buchet warned her as he opened the door, "I went away yesterday to look for food. If they don't get me, then, when you're sure they've gone for good, knock on the door and I'll know it's O.K. to come out."

Denise thrust the key into a crack of the stairs. On the way to the living room she passed through their bedroom, turned Jean's pillow, and arranged the bed to look as if only one person had occupied it. Then she ran to the kitchen to pick up a pot for appearances.

She heard the front door open. Two uniformed men, guns in hand, entered, and she was suddenly calm again.

"Quiet!" she warned them. "My little girl's asleep."

"Where is your husband?"

"He isn't here."

More policemen were pouring in and, at an order from one of the pair who had come in first, they went through all the rooms, without success. The leader turned again to Mme. Buchet, who heard Anne crying, awakened by the intrusion in her room. Denise asked to be allowed to pick up the child. A policeman went with her, then led her to the living room. She told the story that Jean had given her.

"Is your husband in the attic?" the leader asked.

"Of course not."

"Where is the key?"

"The grocer next door has it. We let him use it."

A policeman was sent for the key. Denise was sure that Jean would be taken, but she dared not allow herself to break. Meanwhile, the officer took her and Anne to the grocery, where he asked her whether anyone had entered or left her house that morning. She replied negatively.

"What about you?" the officer asked the grocer.

"I had one customer. He bought a bunch of turnips."

The frightened child was weeping hysterically in Denise's arms. A woman got out of a police car that had drawn up outside; she wore a German uniform.

"I regret to say, madame," the police officer said to Denise, "that I must arrest you. Your child will be sent to a German institution for the rearing of children."

"No!" Denise screamed. "Don't take her!"

"Do not compel me to use force, madame."

"But the child is ill! She needs me. Look at her! If you were a father——"

"I am," he interrupted. "But I am a German first. I do my duty. And so must you."

"What are you going to do with the child?" Denise asked the policewoman.

"She will have the finest care. If no charge is lodged



against you, you'll have her back in a few days. And if she's ill, as you say, she'll get the best treatment. We Germans love children!"

Denise hardened herself. "Be a good girl, Anne," she soothed the child. "Go with the nice lady. Daddy would want you to." But Anne still screamed as she was handed to the policewoman.

At the Gestapo office in the Avenue Louise, Denise passed Valentin, under guard, in the corridor. "Where is Jean?" he whispered, but before she could answer a soldier had brought his hand across Valentin's mouth.

Denise was questioned alone. The Gestapo officer told her that her husband had been arrested and that it was useless for her to lie. But an intuitive caution kept her silent. She was remitted to the women's division of Saint-Gilles.

From the early streetcars young men, singly or in pairs, had alighted to go into the Café des Roses, where it was customary for the coal sellers to stop on their way from Charleroi to Brussels. Freeman had arrived before any of them and taken a seat at a stained table where, from time to time, one or other of the young men came to speak a moment to him. From minute to minute he looked at his watch, wondering what had happened to Buchet.

Dawn had long since yielded to full daylight. The prospective fugitives amused themselves at the dart board, while Freeman reread his paper for the tenth time. One of the young men approached his table to whisper: "Aren't we going after all, La Hulpe?"

"Your guide isn't here yet. God knows why! He's usually the most punctual man I know."

That was at eight o'clock. At nine Freeman was pacing up and down, uncertain whether to let the men try to flee on their own or to send them home. In any case, it might be well for them to wait elsewhere, and he sent them to an-

other café a half mile nearer to Waterloo. They left as they had come, to avoid suspicion. Freeman himself went outside and walked up and down to kill time.

At ten o'clock a tram stopped. A German soldier got off, followed by a peasant woman with her basket on her arm, and finally by Jean Buchet.

"What's up?" Freeman demanded.

"Everything's shot!" Buchet replied. "But let's get inside."

"Why are you late? And you're absolutely white!"

"I've just escaped a firing squad!" Buchet retorted. They were back in the café and seated at the same table that Freeman had had. Buchet had to gulp a drink before he could tell his story.

When he heard the police in his house he opened the trap door of the attic and stepped out to the roof, remembering to close the trap door behind him. His original plan had been to hide in the roof gutter, but he realized that he would be seen from the garden. He proceeded to the next house, where there was a little window within reach, but it was locked.

Buchet went on across the roofs until he reached a kind of platform on which another window faced. He knocked, and an old woman came to the window. By signs he made her understand his plight, and she opened the window for him. "You must be the saboteur from Number 88," she said when he came in. "The whole street is full of cops."

Buchet sent the old woman out to keep him advised of what was happening. It would be fatuous for him to try to save Denise: he would only doom her and himself. At eight-thirty his hostess told him that the police had gone, and he dashed into the street. A glazier told him that his wife and child had been taken away with the grocer. Now he had lost his resolution.

"I can't leave while they're in jail, Paul," he pleaded. "It's utterly impossible."

"I know. Wait here. I'll go down the road to talk to the others and send them off with somebody else."

Left alone, Buchet buried his head in his arms on the dirty table. The situation could not continue; he could not allow his wife and child to buy his freedom; he would have to give himself up. Beside Denise and the suffering child, Belgium, Europe, the world were now nothing to him. He heard footsteps and looked up. Freeman was there.

"I'm going to give myself up, Paul," Buchet said in a flat voice. "I can't let them stay there."

"Don't be an ass!" Freeman retorted sharply. "That's what they're hoping for: Denise and the kid are just being used as bait."

"But I can't let them suffer!"

"Think of all our comrades who've paid for their work."

"You don't understand, Paul. I envy them. I'll go through anything the Germans want to do if my wife and daughter——"

"I know you hate me now, Jean," Freeman said more gently. "We speak different languages. You are right, but I'm not wrong. Remember what Adelin wrote: 'There are times when country must take precedence even over family.'"

"All words!" Buchet replied bitterly. "I'm going back to Brussels."

"I forbid it!"

"No one can forbid it, Paul. I have a duty to my family."

"You have a duty to the Brigade. I am your superior officer. I have the right to command, and you have sworn to obey." Freeman's voice was glacial. "I order you to come with me to La Hulpe."

"I refuse." But Buchet's mind swung madly between the pull of emotion and the duty that he knew was his.

"You have no right to be a traitor," Freeman replied, employing contempt to win his point. "Remember your oath: you've given us certain rights over you. Before I'll let you turn yourself in I'll shoot you myself."

"You bastard!"

"You're wrong, Jean." Freeman tried kindness again. "I'm your best friend right now. I swear to you that I have only one aim at the moment: to free your family. But you're absolutely incapable of thinking now; if you want to see them again you must listen to me. Will you trust me?"

Buchet's vitality was sapped by the emotional conflict. "All right, Paul. I'm sorry. I'll do as you say."

## XII

DENISE BUCHET was shifted from Saint-Gilles to De Forest Prison. There she was led past the visiting rooms, the work-rooms (whose inmates looked incuriously at the weeping newcomer), down the soap-smelling corridors to a little cell with a tiny barred window. Denise sat down on the metal bed and tried to imagine what had happened to her husband and her child. When a bowl of dirty hot water and turnips was thrust through the wicket of her door she ignored it.

Later there was a tapping on the wall, to which at first she paid no attention; then there was an unintelligible voice. Denise put her head against the wall; the voice told her to go to the washbasin and hold her head close to the pipes. Here she could hear much better.

"What's your name?" the unknown voice asked her.

She answered; then, asked why she was imprisoned, she said that the Germans had tried to take her husband, and poured out her story.

"Don't worry too much," the stranger counseled her. "If you're here it means they haven't got your husband. Your little girl will be all right. But in any case don't talk to the Germans. You have no idea what they'll do to make you tell them what they want to know. Be particularly careful if they give you a cell mate—it's sure to be an informer."

Denise, in her turn, asked the identity of her adviser.

"I am Marina Maroutseff," she replied. "I'm in for slapping Germans."

"Why did you do that?"

"I'll tell you some other time."

Marina told her that there were about six hundred women in the prison: common criminals, prostitutes, and political prisoners, including a spy who was awaiting trial and a countess who had been arrested while she was distributing copies of the underground paper, *La Libre Belgique*. Marina also told Denise how to communicate with the women in the cells above and below her own: by tapping on the heating pipe in a simple code that entailed the elimination of some letters from words. Their conversation was interrupted by the sound of footsteps and keys.

Denise went back to the bed and her anguish, which was suddenly cut short by frightful screams from without. She went to her door but she could see nothing. An occasional masculine voice rose above the screams, a laugh or two as the cries rose and fell like a fever chart.

When the screams died at last to a low moan Denise prepared to go to bed. The screaming began again, and she thought she heard tappings on the pipe, but those must have been from some distant cell. Still she listened and managed to spell out the letters: D-E-A-T-H. She tapped on the wall.

"Marina," she called, "what's going on? What was that awful screaming?"

"Be careful, Denise, the guards are making their rounds.

The woman in 115 has just been sentenced to death. She must be hysterical."

Despite the excitement, fatigue mastered Denise at last and she fell into a fitful doze, from which she was awakened by sounds of a struggle just before dawn. Men were talking in German; there was the sound of hobnailed boots and of the opening of an iron door. Then a woman's voice rose: "I won't go! I won't! Pigs! Murderers! Boches!"

Then the voice was muffled, as if the woman's mouth were filled. She must have been gagged. The sound of a vicious slap resounded along the corridor.

In the silence that followed two lay sisters accompanied by two prisoners came round with coffee and bread crusts. While Denise tried to swallow the stuff—the coffee tasted like burned cork—a guard opened the door of her cell. She would be questioned in a half-hour.

For hours queries were hurled at her. When had her husband left? Where had he gone? When was he supposed to have come back? Did she know a man named Pierre Demoor? Did she know that her husband had called himself Souci? Might he have gone to Liège?

The questions were interspersed with promises to return her daughter to her if she would give a few helpful answers. The child was now in the sanitarium of Overysche, she was informed. Denise told the Germans nothing and was taken back to her cell.

On her return Marina told her the news. The woman in Cell 115 had been executed and the others had decided to make their Sunday Mass a requiem in her honor. Two new arrivals had been brought in, accused of espionage. One of them had provided information for train-wreckers at Hal and the other had flashed lights to guide the RAF at night. Jeanne Mathy, in 147, was going to be released the next morning.

Denise's sudden resurgence of hope at the news that it

was possible to be free again, to find her husband and her child, was interrupted by Marina's explanation of her arrest.

"I specialized in teaching Germans manners," she said. "God was good enough to make me pretty, and I used to stroll in the evenings in the squares. I would make eyes at the German officers and they would approach me in the usual German fashion—as coarsely as you could imagine. Every time I would give them two good slaps, with the stone of my ring turned in. It worked dozens of times and had a very good effect on the people who saw it. Lots of other women started doing the same thing. Finally I was arrested for it."

Denise had not listened too closely. "Do you think we could give Jeanne Mathy a message for my husband?" she asked.

"It won't be easy," Marina replied. "She's on the other side of the corridor. But we can try. It will have to go from one woman to another, around the corner and up the other side. The trouble is that all those women will know about it. So make it short and cautious."

Denise pondered a moment. "All right, here's the message: 'Everything's all right. I'm well. Anne is at Overysche.'"

"That's fine," Marina said, "but who gets it? What's your husband's name?"

"Tell her to give the message to Paul Freeman in La Hulpe."

The next night Denise received a parcel. It contained a little food and some comforts, including a needle case hidden in a loaf of bread. When she opened this she found a note that read:

Don't worry. Everything will be all right. You will get packages regularly. Where is Anne? I was very sorry to hear what had happened to your husband, for everybody knows he is a fine man and would do nothing to injure the Germans.

AUNT MARIE

The handwriting of the note was the same as that on the parcel, which bore the return address of her aunt in Uccle. The writing was Jean's.

The days wore on without further questioning, and no more packages came. One morning Marina announced that she was to be tried that day. Denise wished her good luck, awaiting the outcome with some anxiety as a possible clue to her own fate. When Marina returned to her cell late in the afternoon she had been sentenced to five years at forced labor.

Shortly thereafter Denise was interrogated again. In the anteroom of the Gestapo she saw Valentin, and when the guards left them alone for a few minutes she asked him the charge that was lodged against him. He replied that he had been accused of the murder of Jean Oedekerke but that thus far no witnesses had been able to identify him. He was being kept in Breendonck, the most infamous of the German prisons in Belgium. It was known as the Belgian Dachau, where the prisoners were forced to spend their days pushing barrows loaded with rock. The barrows had octagonal wheels.

Denise asked Valentin whether he knew a Pierre Demoor—the Gestapo had asked her about him. "That's one of my names," Valentin replied. "I hope you didn't give me away."

Denise reassured him and then was called into the inner room. As before, she stuck steadfastly to her story that Jean had left the day before her arrest to find food for the family, but she added that perhaps, on his return, he had learned of the raid and dared not go back to the house. Her questioner, a young lieutenant, asked whether a man could not have escaped from their house through the attic and over the roofs. Denise replied that the attic had been locked when the police arrived and they had had to get the key from the grocer. When the lieutenant pointed out that she might have locked the attic herself, she replied innocently:



"But how would we have known you were coming in time to do all this?"

The lieutenant sketched a gesture of annoyance. "You will be released tomorrow morning, Madame Buchet," he said. "Obviously you are innocent. Unfortunately, however, we cannot say the same of your husband, since he is a fugitive. Your child will be kept, therefore, as a hostage."

Denise fell to her knees before the German's desk. "Be good to my little Anne, I beg you! Don't revenge yourselves on a little child who's suffering enough from the occupation!"

"I regret to have to tell you, Madame Buchet, that your daughter is seriously ill. A report from the Overysche sanitarium says that she has lesions of both lungs. I intend to prove to you that we are humane; we help those who help us. I ask nothing of you. But I promise to return your child to you as soon as your husband gives himself up. I might add, incidentally, that that will be a mere formality, since we have no serious charge to make against him."

The next afternoon Denise was back in her house in the Rue Sans-Souci, empty and musty. The house was unbearable to her. She sent a post card at once to Freeman, asking him to meet her any evening at six in the Café des Arts on the Rue de Luxembourg. Each evening thereafter she walked slowly past the café, looking to see who was inside, until one night Freeman was there. But she was afraid to go in at once.

She got on a streetcar and rode a few blocks, standing on the platform. She dismounted at the Porte de Namur and watched the car closely. Just as it started she saw a man leap off the platform; at the same moment she boarded another car bound in another direction. Thus, by a devious route that, she was sure, had fooled the man on her trail, she returned to the café.

"Is Jean all right?" she asked as soon as she had joined Freeman. "I didn't want him to come."

"You are more sensible than he. He saw your card and raised hell when I forbade him to come with me. Otherwise he's all right."

Denise told Freeman of her experiences in the prison and of the conditions that the Germans had set when they released her. She repeated what Valentin had told her and added the story of the child.

"I'll have to make an appeal to your patriotism," Freeman said. "You must make no attempt to see Jean, even for a second. It's much too dangerous. You'll have to communicate through me. In case you should write to him—though I don't want you to—promise that you won't mention a word about the child or the Germans' offer to release her if Jean gives himself up. He'd do it in a minute."

"I should hope he would!" Denise said warmly. "Why shouldn't he? There's no danger for him—the Gestapo told me that."

"Of course they did," Freeman replied. "That's part of the act—but it's a lie. He'd be shot in three days!"

"I don't believe you! You're just saying that to—What makes you think he'd be executed?"

"I will tell you, but you must never repeat it: it was your husband who killed Oedekerke. Now do you understand?"

Denise's pride in her husband was too great for speech.

### XIII

ON SUNDAY Denise went to Overysche. Anne was too weak to be brought downstairs, and Denise had to see her in the children's ward. The child's face was almost transparent. Her happiness at the sight of her mother was dominated by her physical weakness. Denise asked the nurse in attend-

ance to be especially careful of Anne and the nurse smiled.

"She is the daughter of a brave Belgian, madame, isn't she? (She will get all the care I can give her!)"

Denise begged the nurse to tell her the truth about the child's condition, but the nurse could not speak. Denise understood and the sobs welled in her throat, but she dared not weep before her daughter.

When the half-hour allowed for visits had passed, Denise kissed the child's forehead and went to the station to take the train back to Brussels. Freeman was waiting on a bench, puffing on his pipe. He made no movement, but she sat down beside him after having hesitated before one or two other benches.

"How's the little one?" he asked.

"Bad. But don't tell Jean. Is he all right?"

"Yes, but he ought to have guts enough to leave," Freeman said rather sharply.

"Tell him I want him to go," Denise said.

"He's so damned rash. He even wanted to come here with me."

Two men in civilian clothes were approaching them rather ominously. "Do you know the lady?" one of them asked Freeman.

"Yes," he smiled, "we're old friends of two minutes' standing."

"What were you telling her?"

"We were talking about the delay in the trains," Freeman replied, still smiling.

"Your identity card, please."

Freeman produced it, and the two men looked it over carefully. "What are you doing here if you live in La Hulpe?" the spokesman demanded.

"Waiting for the *Bruesseler Zeitung* to come in."

The policemen looked at each other. "All right. The train'll be in soon, I guess."

As they turned away the train for Brussels arrived. Denise boarded it, and Freeman slipped out of the station to go home. As he neared the first café a man rose out of the shadows beside the road. It was Buchet.

"Get out of here, you fool!" Freeman ordered. "Didn't you see? The Germans are here."

"I know; I was looking in the window. I'm sorry, but I had to see my wife. God, how thin she is!"

"She has more guts than you," Freeman said dryly.

"Is Anne all right?" Buchet asked anxiously.

Freeman cleared his throat. "Much better," he said at last.

"Do you swear it?"

"Yes, Jean. But what just happened ought to show you how dangerous it is for you here. We'll both be arrested. Your wife wants you to go to France."

"Don't be a fool, Paul. How can you ask me to leave the country when my kid's a German prisoner? Be sensible."

"All right, but you've got to leave La Hulpe. And you can't go back to Brussels. How about Mons? Soupard has plenty of work to be done there—it will keep your mind occupied."

Buchet knew that his friend was right and he yielded.

Four days later the papers announced the blowing up of a coal mine near Mons. Twenty-five men, masked and armed, had trussed up the watchmen at night, gone down a shaft where the mine's explosives were stored, and seized the entire stock. Some of it was used to destroy the mine and the rest was carried away.

Buchet had been one of these twenty-five. He entered into the work with a certain zest, for at least he would have his revenge on the Germans. Richard Soupard had shown himself a remarkable executive in the work of the Brigade. Before the war he had been a member of the executive committee of the Transport Workers' Union and the editor of the union's paper. When the invasion came he fought at the

Albert Canal and, after the eighteen days, he returned to Houdeng, where he owned a small house. But since he worked in Mons and communications were poor, he had moved to a suburb of the city to work with all the unions there.

When Buchet first arrived in Mons he lived with Soupart, but the leader soon lodged him in the house of a colleague near by, for he feared that he was being watched. They met in the streets or in workers' restaurants.

One Saturday morning shortly after the explosion in the mine Buchet was awakened by his new host, the miner, with the warning that German police were posted in the street. Buchet dressed quickly and joined the miner at the window. There were four men talking in the street and another entering an alley that ran along Soupart's house. The others approached the house directly. One tried to peer in the windows. Another put down his rifle beside the door and took out a ring of keys.

A workman passed on a bicycle. The Germans turned to look at him and Soupart's door swung open silently. Soupart stood in the embrasure, a revolver in his hand.

Buchet and the miner heard a rapid series of shots. The Germans fell and Soupart ran out, across the street and into an alley. The policeman who had taken the other alley came back, attracted by the shots. When he saw his colleagues lying wounded, he blew his whistle frantically and shot his pistol wildly into the air.

To give themselves a better appearance, Buchet and the miner joined the crowd that was gathering in the street. German police cars roared up, and an ambulance took away the wounded men.

"Where do you suppose Richard has gone?" Buchet asked.

"Probably to his house in Houdeng," the miner answered, "or his parents' there."

"That's the wrong thing to do," Buchet said. "He ought to go to Brussels."

"Someone should get hold of him and tell him."

"I'll do it," Buchet said, "if you'll tell me how to get to Houdeng. I'm in an impossible situation here anyway."

The miner gave him explicit directions, and Buchet took a halting old interurban tramway that got him to Houdeng only in the afternoon. Soupарт's house stood at the end of a path that wound round a hill and was bordered by ditches. Buchet set off on foot along a lane that ran beside a hedge, but he ducked quickly when he heard the sound of cars and motorcycles behind him. The German vehicles roared past and Buchet picked himself up. He came to a garden where a peasant stood leaning on his hoe. Buchet asked him what was going on, and the peasant replied that Germans had been pouring into the village to surround Soupарт's house. Indeed, he could already hear occasional shots.

Seeing Buchet go nearer, the peasant dropped his hoe and went along. The two men came as close as they dared to the line of German soldiers whose bullets were pocking the stucco of the house. Others were crouching in the ditches, as if waiting to storm the house, which was surrounded by a low wall that gave Soupарт an added advantage.

There was a sudden dry staccato of shots. Soupарт had a sub-machine gun trained on the Germans and swung it in a slow, careful radius. The Germans replied, but more or less at random. Soupарт was at an upstairs window behind the frame of which he could disappear rapidly.

A lull in the firing came and two Germans entered the path that led to Soupарт's house, with an old couple between them. "That's Soupарт's parents," the peasant told Buchet.

The two Germans put the old people in front of them as they walked toward the house. Behind the quartet other Germans formed a double line, armed with guns and tear-

gas bombs. Soupart was firing over his parents' heads into the ranks of men behind them. The two guards were pressing the points of their bayonets against the old couple's backs.

The sub-machine gun was suddenly silent. Soupart disappeared from the window as his parents continued their slow Calvary. Then the door of the house opened and Soupart came out, revolver in hand. As rifle bullets splattered around him he raised his revolver and carefully put the muzzle against his temple. He fired and fell.

Buchet decided to return to Brussels. But it was too dangerous to take a train; he must go by the slow inter-urbans. The trip took two days by this means, for the cars did not run all night. Between Enghien and Hal, German troopers boarded the car and demanded the passengers' identity cards and travel permits. Buchet tendered his forged card—he had no permit—and sat back to await the result. As he had expected, the German told him that he was under arrest.

But a woman near by began to insult another German who was searching her market basket. He slapped her and she slapped back. The German seized her wrists and called his colleague to handcuff her. The soldier who had taken Buchet's card handed it back without thinking and obeyed the corporal's orders; the two men led the woman from the car and it resumed its journey.

Brussels, though he had not seen the city for weeks, seemed unchanged to Buchet. He intended to make straight for La Hulpe, but, despite his narrow escape on the tram, an irresistible attraction drew him to the Rue Sans-Souci, though he knew that, as a leader of the White Brigade, he should be among the most conscientious observers of its rules. His hand closed over the door key that was still in his pocket and he turned almost involuntarily toward his own street.

When he reached the corner he peered into the darkness. The street was empty.

He almost ran to his door, tremblingly fitted the key into the lock, and opened. The house was quiet. There was no one downstairs. He mounted to his bedroom. The door was shut. He knocked three times.

"Who's there?" Denise's voice was thick with sleep.

"Me."

"Who's me?"

"Jean."

The door opened violently and his wife stood before him, reproach and fear in her eyes. "What's happened, Jean?"

"Nothing. I just had to see you."

He took her hands and kissed her feverishly. Denise broke away. "Aren't you being terribly foolish, coming back like this?" she asked fearfully. "You'll surely be arrested and——" She dared not finish her sentence.

"I don't know; I don't care. I simply had to."

A spasm of coughing shook her, and Jean put his arm around her. "You must take better care of yourself!" he said.

"I'll go to the Ixelles clinic today. Sunday I'm going to see Anne again."

"Is she any better?" he asked anxiously.

"Oh"—Denise forced a new cough to conceal the tremor in her voice—"yes, she's all right. Of course she misses us dreadfully."

"Let me stay here awhile, Denise," Buchet pleaded. "I'm tired and I haven't been home for so long!"

She protested that the neighbors would see him leave, that the house was probably still watched; but he insisted and she was too eased by his presence to resist. She yielded when he promised to remain indoors all the next day and to leave



In the morning Denise went to the clinic. The line was long and racked by a kind of universal coughing. When at last her turn came she was examined and X-rayed and told to return in a week. Denise asked the doctor whether he had found any symptoms.

"All I can say to you now," he replied, "is that you must get much more food and rest than you have been."

On her return Denise saw a uniform at her door. For a wild moment she feared that Jean would surely be arrested now, but as she drew nearer she saw that the wearer of the uniform was a telegraph messenger. Denise took the message from him. It said only: "Come Overyssche soon as possible."

She went inside. The house was empty and her fears revived. But then she realized that when the messenger rang Jean must have fled to the attic. As she went up to allay his apprehension she met him coming down. Without a word she handed him the message.

He read it and crumpled it in his hand. "What did they tell you at the clinic?"

"Nothing. I have to go back next week. But this afternoon I'm going to Overyssche."

She changed her clothes and left, after an agreement that they would meet in the evening at the Café des Arts, which Buchet chose because it had two entrances. He remained in the house until it was quite dark and then took advantage of the black-out to go to the Brigade meeting.

Buchet was greeted with mixed feelings. The others were glad to see him, but they knew the risks that he ran and that he brought to everyone with whom he associated. But even more surprise was occasioned when Valentin entered. He limped and he seemed emaciated.

Valentin stilled the questions that met him. "I escaped from Breendonck," he said. He had fashioned a crude saw and, with his cell mate, he had sawed enough of the bars in his window to permit them to escape. They had bound

their bedclothes together to form a rope, but it proved too short and they had had to jump; that explained his limp.

Valentin was reluctant to talk of what he had seen in Breendonck. He spoke of the octagonal-wheeled barrows loaded with stones and the fiendish execution of the rule that no one who did not work might eat: for each group of ten men only nine barrows were provided. Maddened by despair and hunger, all the prisoners had at first battled one another every morning for the privilege of this torture; old men and invalids fought with mutilated war veterans and young students. But soon their comradeship taught them to put up only a sham fight: the weakest in each group then went back to his cell and each of the others saved a portion of his day's food to give to the tenth man.

"You have to get out now too," Freeman told him.

Buchet left early to meet his wife. He took a table in the rear of the café and trembled whenever the doors opened.

At last he saw Denise come in, looking even older and paler than before. She stopped by the telephone booths and seemed to be absorbed in the study of the directory. Seeing no sign of anyone following her, Jean joined her.

"What's wrong with Anne?" he asked at once.

"She had a crisis. I'm going back Sunday."

"Was it serious?"

"The nurse says not. You're not coming home tonight, are you?" she asked apprehensively.

"No, I'm staying with Chaudron. When shall I see you again?"

"I don't know. I want you to leave Belgium, Jean. Soon. Now. If you love me, please go."

"We'll see, dear. I have to leave now."

Their hands touched briefly and separated. Buchet slipped out to the dark sidewalk and walked swiftly to a streetcar, not daring to look back lest he lose his resolution.

## XIV

PAUL FREEMAN was sent to Ghent to cope with serious difficulties that had arisen in the home of one of the first and boldest sections of the White Brigade. The Ghent unit, in fact, had been the first to adopt the name that later became universal as a challenge to the self-styled Black Brigade.

The leaders of the Ghent White Brigade never met in the city itself. They would go to some old country inn in Deurle or Laethem-Saint-Martin, in the heart of that peaceful country so dear to the Flemish painters, to plan their work of violence. In the beginning the section lost some members through arrests, but it soon profited from its own experience and that of other units, and for a year its rolls remained intact despite constant activity. There was hardly a night when there was not a fire roaring in some railroad station, factory, warehouse, or farm. In Nederbaekel, Elzele, Audenarde, Courtrai, the German authorities had to watch helplessly as flames voraciously devoured their seized properties.

The whole Flemish part of the country was a mesh of systematic sabotage. The units of Ghent and Antwerp often worked together and had, indeed, succeeded in co-operating more than once with subsections in Flemish Brabant. One of their most daring accomplishments was, as *Belgica* recited, the work of several groups. A number of workers forced to labor for the Germans at the Haeren airdrome set off the sirens used to signal RAF raids. When the Germans rushed as one man for the bomb shelters, the Belgians cut the telephone wires that connected the airdrome with the German police and with air staff headquarters in Brussels. Another group, at the same time, made off with a number of German weapons—rifles, machine guns, grenades, and ammunition.

The Gestapo ordered the arrest of one de Wever, who was believed to be the center of resistance. One day, as he was walking home with a friend, he saw that he was being followed. As soon as he was in the house he saw that four men were standing outside his street door. He wanted to flee through the back yard, but two more Germans were waiting there.

De Wever had an automatic that he knew how to use. He killed both the men in the yard and leaped over the hedge that surrounded it. His friend, however, stumbled and fell, and the Germans in the front, running at the sound of the shots, seized him. This arrest was a particular blow to the Brigade, since the man knew a great deal of its workings and was unfortunately capable of only limited physical resistance.

The next few weeks passed without incident, though the Brigade was kept informed of the tortures that were inflicted on the prisoner. Day after day he stood firm against beatings, breaking of bones, burnings, until at last his will power shattered and he poured out all that he should never have known.

The same day twelve brigadiers were arrested. The Gestapo made it known that it believed that it had seized the brains of the organization, and Brussels sent in specialists in torture to extract every iota of knowledge from them.

It was at this time that Freeman arrived in Ghent. His first task was to reorganize the Brigade with new leaders and to render valueless to the Germans any information that they might wring from their captives. Meeting places were changed, and arms caches were shifted at once.

Meanwhile the Black Brigade was jubilant at what it believed was the crushing of its enemies. To celebrate the event it planned to hold a great rally in the banquet hall of the Swan Restaurant in Brussels. It was also Freeman's job to spoil this, and Buchet, whose departure now awaited only a favorable opportunity, was put in a leading role. Buchet had grown

a mustache and, with Freeman, he went one day to inspect the site of the meeting.

On the way they passed through the Great Square of Brussels, which the restaurant almost overlooked. Neither was insensible of the historic significance of this open place in the capital, beneath the exquisite façades of old houses dominated by the tower of the Hôtel de Ville. Here the burghers had rebelled against the tyranny of the Duke of Alba; here the revolt against the Austrians had begun; here the tidal wave of 1830 had overthrown another tyranny; here, in 1914, the great Burgomaster Max had defied the Germans and, in 1918, King Albert and Cardinal Mercier had celebrated the deliverance of their country; here, only a few months before, Burgomaster van de Meulebroeke had spoken the challenge to the Germans that Mayor La Guardia of New York was to hail as the code of honor of the world's mayors. And within the aura of this place, as it were, the Germans planned to commit their sacrilege!

In the restaurant itself Freeman and Buchet drank a glass of beer and listened to what they could catch of the conversations of some of the leaders who were discussing their forthcoming meeting. Buchet, announcing loudly that he was going to the lavatory, had an opportunity to examine the electric meter.

A few days later a man in the uniform of the electrical service came to the restaurant early one morning. A cleaning woman opened the door to him and let him work undisturbed. He sent her to check the lighting in a remote part of the building and went swiftly to the banquet hall. He made mental notes of the layout of the whole floor and then shoved a little boxlike package under a small stage that overhung a kind of orchestra pit. He knelt down to adjust something on the box and pushed it securely out of sight and hearing. Then he returned to the meter, made a joke to the cleaning woman, and left, whistling a popular song.

Later that day Buchet met his wife in the rug department of a large store in the Rue Neuve. He led her to the phonograph department, asked a salesgirl for an album, and with Denise went into one of the little booths. There they embraced like new sweethearts.

"How's Anne?" Buchet asked as he put a record on the machine.

"She was worse again. But they say she'll be much better now. Some new kind of crisis, the nurse told me. But how long are you going to stay, Jean? You mustn't take such risks!"

"Not long, Denise. . . . Freeman'll fix it so that we can spend our last day together. But you look ill, dearest."

"No, Jean, I'm just tired—and worried. I'll be all right when I get Anne back and you've left."

When the album was finished they left the store separately. Denise looked at her reflection in the shopwindows that she passed. She looked very ill indeed, but she had had the strength not to tell her husband that, on her visit to the clinic that morning, the doctor had informed her of the existence of a lesion in one lung.

Buchet met Freeman and Chaudron near the Great Square. De Wever and Valentin were with them. "All set, Jean?" Freeman asked.

"Yes, I think so. What are you doing here?" He turned to Valentin. "I thought you'd gone."

"Not yet. But it's all set. I'm going with two others—Freeman had better give me all the reports tonight, just in case."

"With whom are you leaving?" Freeman inquired.

"Two grand fellows, Jean Gilet and Jacques Dumont. We've spent weeks getting ready."

The police were holding back the sparse traffic to permit the celebrators to march into the Swan Restaurant. The meeting was to begin at nine o'clock.

"What time did you set the alarm for?" Chaudron grinned to Buchet.

"Nine-thirty. Plenty of time yet. But we'd better break up. Chaudron, suppose you hang around near the Swan to see how it comes off. We'll meet you here later."

They waited anxiously, separated, until a sharp explosion burst on the air. Glass showered from the windows of the Swan Restaurant. Chaudron ran with the other passing pedestrians toward the door when a second explosion roared out. The police themselves were frightened by the new blast, and the curious were able to enter unmolested. Chaudron found the banquet hall, when at last he pushed his way to it, full of broken furniture and panic-stricken men. A number of those on the stage had been killed or injured, and many had been trampled as they rushed for the exits, especially when the second explosion came. When the police, somewhat reorganized, began to clear a way for stretcher-bearers, Chaudron slipped out.

The next day's papers reported that seven men had been killed by the two explosions and thirty-five more had been injured, besides a number who had been trampled at the doors and in the aisles. The press made much of the investigators' discovery in the wreckage of a placard that read: "The White Brigade punishes all traitors."

The Germans' reply was to commence at once the trial of the thirteen Ghent brigadiers in their prisons. The prosecutor admitted to the military court that he had been wrong in thinking that he had the head of the organization in his grasp: the White Brigade had a hundred heads. The rest of his speech concerned the "massacre" at the Swan Restaurant—three more of the victims had died of their injuries—and concluded with the usual propaganda statement that the Brigade was the tool of Anglo-Jewish plutocrats and Communists. The defense was then allowed to speak.

Joseph Impens, a pastry cook, informed the court that he

was the only guilty party. With Gustave Questiaux, a radio salesman, and Paul Eyckens, a dentist, who had already admitted their previous activity, he had formed the Ghent unit of the White Brigade, he said, and they had enlisted others whose names he would not give.

The presiding judge replied, according to copies of the suborned press that were smuggled out of Belgium, that the crimes of the accused were unparalleled in the history of sabotage. Not only had they destroyed innumerable industrial and agricultural establishments, but, from their prison cells, they had inspired and directed the "slaughter" of the Black Brigade. The court then retired for a few minutes to "deliberate."

On its return the chief judge remained standing while his colleagues resumed their seats. He repeated the list of the defendants' crimes and concluded: "In consequence whereof, we pronounce the following sentences:

"Constant de Greef of Mont-Saint-Amand, the death penalty, four times.

"Joseph Impens, pastry cook of Ghent, the death penalty, seven times.

"Jacques Pirsens, student of Wondelghem, former member of the Flemish National Bund, the death penalty, seven times.

"Gustave Questiaux, radio salesman of Ghent, the death penalty, five times.

"Palmyre Bruneel, Madame Questiaux, one year of forced labor.

"Léon van Cauwenberghe, son of the burgomaster of Wondelghem, the death penalty.

"Marcel Desmet, Winter-Help assistant, two years of forced labor.

"Roger Rousseaux, twenty-seven months of forced labor.

"Madame Vanderhaegen-Vandenbulke, freeholder of Ghent, one year.

"Petrus van Acker, laborer of Wondelghem, three years.



"Madame Cardon de Moester, fifteen months.

"Désiré Cordonnier of Wondelghem, acquitted."

## XV

THE HOLOCAUST of Tessenderloo must have seemed like the end of the world to those peaceful townsfolk who derived their livings from the chemical plant in that tranquil corner of the Campine near Antwerp.

The various sections of the White Brigade knew that the great factory had been seized by the Germans and that it contributed a wholesome proportion of their war production. In Brussels and in Liège particularly there had been much discussion of the reports on its output. The works specialized in nitrate of ammonia, the explosive power of which was tremendous.

The factory comprised several buildings spread over a large area more or less set off from the town, as required by law for the protection of the residents. Before the war Tessenderloo's balance sheet had been extremely variable and its stocks had made and shattered many fortunes. The Germans, however, kept the plant busy and devoted it entirely to the manufacture of explosives.

Various members of the White Brigade had studied the problem of its destruction. The prime stumbling block was a moral consideration: inevitably a great number of innocent Belgians would have to be killed in order to save the lives of hundreds of thousands of Allied soldiers, for the explosion would be almost like an earthquake.

The second problem was less metaphysical. The managers of the plant knew how great was the danger of combustion. A vast and deep concrete vat had been built into which each day's production was put and every precaution against fire

was taken. Every combustive agent, however insignificant, was scientifically eliminated.

An attack from without would be useless. Success could be achieved only by a suicide squad of men who were resigned to dying in the accomplishment of their task. The attempt must be made, too, when the reserve in the vat was at its lowest.

Slowly a nucleus of heroic men had been gathered. One Flemish worker, when asked whether he would take part, replied by citing the example of the Skoda workers who, in sabotaging their plant, had died in a boiling river of molten metal. "What a Czech can do," he concluded, "a Belgian can too."

The workings of the Tessenderloo plant were for the most part secret. However, it was known definitely that a great array of batteries and compressors was used to produce sulphuric acid, synthetic ammonia, nitric acid, and other materials necessary for the manufacture of explosives and poison gases.

On the morning of April 29, 1942, the flow of production of Tessenderloo was continuing at its normal pace. The chimneys smoked as usual; the workmen performed their task of concocting death for the Russian on the steppe, for the Greek and Yugoslav guerrilla in the mountains. Machine guns fed by Tessenderloo wiped out the Jews of Poland; torpedoes carried Tessenderloo's cargo into the hearts of ships on the Atlantic, and some of its production was destined to be taken by submarine to the United States. From Coventry to Moscow, from Spitzbergen to Libya men were dying because of the unceasing flow in the Campine.

On that April morning, as Freeman and Buchet and the others knew, there would be less than two hundred tons of material in the vat, for one thousand tons had been shipped out the day before. But what man would have the courage to scratch a match, to rub a potassium-chlorate tablet against

iron and produce the spark that would smash him and a thousand others into nothing? The man who dies bravely before a firing squad is honored in death even if only by an anonymous cross; the nameless soldier killed in battle knows that he will be symbolized in the memorials to the unknown soldiers. But the hero of Tessenderloo can never be known; he had not even the little satisfaction that posterity would honor him for a deed the courage of which no man can imagine.

In midmorning on April 29 the sky was clear; the air was warm as on that day almost two years before when the Germans had marched in. Peasants worked in their fields amid the budding flowers. And then the world was engulfed in an awful nothingness.

The sound of the explosion was so tremendous that many did not hear it. Only their eyes recorded the chaos, soon yielding to a kind of instinctive perception. For miles around houses were unroofed and shattered and the sky was black as legend tells us it was at the hour of the Crucifixion.

The product of years of labor and finance and scheming was restored in a split second to its primordial dust. In a millennial chaos it was impossible to distinguish the wreckage of bodies from that of things.

Slowly the roar of blasts broke up into the rumble of collapsing buildings and the inhuman shrieks of mutilated men and women. A rescue worker who was among the dozens of services called to the scene said afterward that in a radius of nearly ten miles there was not a whole window, not a tree firm and straight. Terrified villagers cowered in their doorways on the periphery of the explosion; as one drew nearer, one saw crazily leaning houses, bodies broken where they had been hurled against walls.

The town of Tessenderloo itself had simply been wiped out. Nothing remained of its houses, its school, its inn, and little of its inhabitants. More than 250 of them had been killed outright; from the town and from the outlying build-

ings of the factory where the blast had had less force, 2,100 injured persons had been taken after hours and days of search. One of these declared afterward:

"We were thrown to the ground, and the walls crumbled on top of us. We could see an immense column of flame and brownish smoke. In three seconds the whole place was in ruins."

*Independent Belgium*, published in England, compiled reports from witnesses and survivors into this picture:

Cries of pain and terror came from all sides. Many persons were torn apart. Others did not die at once but suffered indescribable agonies. Some who were in the environs simply fled and were found in the fields, gasping and deprived of reason. A train had to be brought from Diest to shelter the survivors.

Nothing remained of the factory save the stumps of the chimneys and a vast crater surrounded by smaller ones. Great masses of steel and concrete had been shot into the air to fall and flatten buildings or bury themselves in the ground.

In the great crater in the center of the plant, dirty liquid of unknown origin floated below its edges, covered with a greenish oil-like substance. Farther away there was a mass of twisted rails. In all the ruins it was often necessary to use dynamite before bodies could be removed.

This was supplemented by a description published in the occupied country itself:

"It was over before it began," a survivor said. "An unimaginable explosion followed by the end of the world. Everybody was at least hurt; some more and some less, but everybody bleeding and running madly through the streets, stumbling over bodies and paying no attention to the shrieks of those who had been pinned under a beam or a girder. The sky seemed full of huge chunks of iron and concrete."

Four days later Buchet and Freeman were still aghast at the magnitude of the destruction that they had helped to

set off. Endlessly they had discussed the moral aspect: whether they had been justified in sacrificing so many Belgian lives, whether the cost was outweighed by the German destruction that they had prevented. When the radio described the scene they listened at once with horror and with satisfaction.

It was Sunday. In every church requiems were said for the victims of Tessengerloo. Denise, who knew nothing of her husband's part in the explosion, had gone to Overysse to see their daughter, with an agreement to meet Buchet at five o'clock in a church in Malaise. The vesper hour would protect them.

Freeman, who thoroughly disapproved the project, walked to Malaise with Buchet. When they left, a number of cars were drawing up before Dr. Bratt's house and on the bridge beyond a German sentry walked his post. Those who still had bicycles were riding them in the sweet spring air, heading for the lilac-covered valley that led to Overysse.

At a café near the church Freeman left his friend, who went on into the dimly lighted building. The vesper service was already in progress. Buchet knelt in the back of the church and waited for the congregation to leave. Late sunlight poured in, colored by the stained-glass windows, and fell before the altar above which burned the little symbolic light.

As the crowd thinned out he saw a woman kneeling nearer the front of the church and when everyone had gone he went closer to her. It was Denise, in tears. She looked up when she heard his step and took his hands in hers.

"Anne is dead."

Buchet dropped to his knees beside her. He had brought death to others; now it was his. He chafed his wife's cold hands.

"When did she die?" he asked in a broken voice.

"Last night. The funeral is tomorrow."

"Denise!" he cried, choking. "You don't believe I killed her, do you?" For the moment he was sure of his own guilt.

She was sobbing uncontrollably now. He looked at her: the sunken cheeks, the staring eyes, the graying hair, and the bowed body. He had never loved his wife so much as in this hour.

Denise crossed herself and closed her eyes. At length she mastered herself somewhat.

"I am going back tonight—to be with her. . . . Do you remember, Jean, when you began with the White Brigade, you took me into her room and pointed to her and said it was for her? It's all over now!"

In a sense it was true. The impelling motive of all that he had done was gone. He had thought to save the country from the Germans for his daughter. But they had slowly killed her. He remembered how she had grown whiter and whiter, how remiss he had been in not noticing at the time. He thought of all the children of Belgium and he remembered the statistics that he had always found too dull, the figures that marked the progress of what the doctors called "the 1941 tuberculosis." It was not only with the products of Krupp and Skoda and Creusot and Tessengerloo that the Germans waged war.

Tessengerloo—that had been perhaps a premature act of vengeance for his daughter. He touched Denise's hand again and they turned toward the little light, the rudimentary symbol of hope. "I should have paid, not the child," he whispered. She did not answer.

"Denise," he went on, "we do not belong to ourselves or to each other any more. We have to sacrifice. It was one of our men that deliberately blew up Tessengerloo, knowing that it would kill men and women and children who had done no wrong. That man died with them. We have no right to give up. We've lost our child; how many thousands of Jews have seen their children killed before their eyes in Poland!"

There was a step behind them. "Hide, my dearest!" Denise breathed as she rose. But it was only Freeman.

"Time for Jean to go, Denise," he said almost brusquely.

Denise gripped the top of a bench to steady herself. "Anne died last night, Paul."

"I'm sorry." Too shocked to say more, Freeman turned and went out.

"Go, Jean," Denise said. "It's doing us no good to stay here. Please go. Let me go back to Anne."

He kissed her and went out.

Before dawn the next day Buchet got up. He promised Freeman that he would do nothing rash and that he would be back by noon. The birds were barely awake when he struck out across the dewy meadows. Buchet followed a path along a beet field and then across country until he came to a wood that overlooked the valley beyond which lay the sanitarium and, near it, the cemetery. Shivering, he looked down at the hamlet of Overysse.

He was there for hours before the gate of the sanitarium opened to allow a little procession to pass into the road. In the van marched six peasants, on their shoulders a minuscule coffin. Buchet knelt and tried to remember how to pray. He saw the little cortège go up the road to the cemetery and in through the gate, among the rectangular headstones. Among them was his wife, he knew; she would be standing beside that gash in the earth until it had been filled.

He had no idea how long he remained on his knees. When he rose he turned to go back to La Hulpe; then he turned again for a final glimpse. Two armed German soldiers stood at either side of the gate of Anne Buchet's last resting place.

## XVI

IF THIS were a novel of Denise and Jean Buchet, many pages would be given over to an account of their last days together in Belgium, when they stayed in Freeman's house in La Hulpe. When the mornings were fine they walked together in the countryside, speaking little, sharing their grief in silence. Both tried to steady themselves with their hope of a distant future, but in the meantime their road was hard. For him the immediate prospect was that of flight through France and Spain, with all the risks that it entailed; for her it was almost a second death in their family, leaving her to bear alone the hardships of the occupation. Denise knew that she was tubercular—the doctor at the clinic had left no doubt—but she said nothing to Jean now.

Shortly before Buchet's departure Valentin arrived at Freeman's house, to the general surprise, since it was believed that he had left for England. His explanation was sufficient, however.

In Valentin's Brigade in Antwerp were two young airmen who had fought in 1940 and whose sole ambition was to resume the battle. Jean Gilet and Jacques Dumont worked diligently in the underground movement, but it was not enough for them. Their names had long been among the lists of potential fugitives, but there were many ahead of them. It was Gilet who suggested at last that they flee by plane.

Dumont and Valentin thought at first that he was joking. But he reminded them that an old trainer was still kept at an improvised airfield near the canal on the new road to Brussels. Gilet and Dumont, since they were trained fliers, de-



cided to investigate the plane's condition; Valentin was to accompany them in their flight.

The two fliers bicycled to the airdrome that night. When they had almost reached it they hid their bicycles in a clump of bushes beside the road and went the rest of the way on foot. The field had been taken over by the Germans and there were sentries on post. But the farm that bordered the field was still undisturbed; in fact, cows still browsed or slept in the meadows. Apparently the Germans had occupied the airfield merely as a precautionary measure.

The old trainer had been kept in a barn at the far corner of the field, opposite the road. Gilet and Dumont made their way carefully across the meadows to reach it; once there, Gilet took a bunch of keys from his pocket and tried them all until he found one that unlocked the door.

They closed the door again behind them. Gilet lit a shaded flashlight and picked out the silhouette of the plane. It was covered with dust and the droppings of chickens. On closer inspection they found that the instrument panel had been removed. The motor was still in place and apparently nothing else was missing. But nothing could be done without an instrument panel.

The men returned cautiously to their bicycles and pedaled home. The next day they met Valentin again and told him what they had found. Not only was the instrument panel missing, but the gasoline lines were broken. Above all, the machine had not been used for two years and, while the motor seemed to be in good condition, it was questionable whether it would turn over. Then there would be the major problem of fuel. After much discussion they decided to try to repair the plane and procure gasoline and oil. Valentin was to continue with his White Brigade work while the others devoted themselves solely to the plane.

Gilet and Dumont began by stealing automobile gasoline wherever they found it, however small the quantities. They

decided to try to "step it up" to aviation quality, but one attempt was sufficient: the resulting explosion almost wrecked the friend's garage where they were working.

They turned then to the black market, where anything could be had—indirectly everything came ultimately from German soldiers—for a price. It was unbelievable how much fuel was needed for the old 90-horsepower machine. But they had a little money and borrowed more and at last they had a cache of high-quality gasoline. But the black market could not supply an instrument panel.

Gilet and Dumont decided to build their own instrument panel, confining themselves to the most necessary elements. Their first task was to construct a level-flight indicator. By careful searches among their friends they managed to acquire some glass tubing and red ink. Everyone whom they approached knew why they wanted the materials, but no one asked an indiscreet question.

Valentin had spoken to Freeman about the lack of materials, and the latter had communicated with Brigade sections in Ghent, Namur, a half-dozen towns. Metal tubing was somehow found for the gasoline lines. A turn-and-bank indicator was constructed with a ball-bearing mounted in castor oil and sealed in a half-bent glass tube.

A major necessity was an air-speed indicator. One of their friends had a Packard speedometer, but they found no way of adapting it to an airplane. Gilet took a bedspring, stretched part of it straight, and attached a piece of tin to the end. This he mounted on a flat board and then attached it to a friend's automobile. As wind pressure forced the spring back, he marked out the mile-per-hour speed. Not satisfied with this test, Dumont tried the apparatus on a motorcycle, an experiment that checked with the first.

Night by night, as their instruments were completed, they took them to the barn where the plane was kept. To be sure

that they would be accurate, they jacked up the tail to make the machine level.

The motor's lubricating oil was still in place but dirty and full of moisture. They drained the oil and tried to filter it, but the task was impossible and they were compelled to use it as it was. Working by the shaded flashlight, they cleaned and set the spark plugs and the ignition system.

They had almost despaired of getting or constructing an altimeter when a friend who worked at an airdrome where the Germans kept the wrecks of damaged planes that had crashed on their way back from England brought them two altimeters that he had stolen from useless machines. Then they procured distilled water and a battery tester and made sure that the batteries were serviceable.

Each night they had brought a tin of gasoline and buried it near the barn. At last the entire stock was at hand, and one night Valentin borrowed a bicycle to go with them to test the plane. Unfortunately the lock on the door had been changed. Apparently the Germans had somehow got wind of their plans; perhaps they had undone the months of laborious toil that had put the trainer into flying shape.

Gilet set to work with his treasury of miscellaneous keys. One after another failed, but at last he succeeded in unlocking the door. The three Belgians entered the barn cautiously (Valentin kept his hand on the revolver in his coat pocket), but it was empty. Most miraculous of all, they found that the plane had not been touched. The changing of the lock must have been simply a routine action.

They set up a relay system to get the gasoline tins to the barn. Valentin carried each tin to Dumont, who stood midway between the hiding place and the barn; Dumont took it to Gilet in the barn, who poured it directly into the machine's tank.

When the plane had been fueled they all climbed into its two cockpits to see whether it could accommodate the three

of them. It was extremely cramped; whether the plane could take off with so much weight could be determined only at the last minute.

Gilet and Dumont tossed a coin for the task of piloting. Dumont won and got back into the cockpit. Gilet and Valentin opened the barn's big doors and pushed the plane out into the field. The sentry's back was turned where he stood in the distance. Gilet swung the propeller while Dumont maneuvered the engine controls feverishly. There was a metallic humming, but the engine did not take hold. The roar that they at once feared and longed for would not come.

But it seemed that the sentry had heard something. Quickly they rolled the plane back into the barn and hid the gasoline tins in a corner. Then they stole back to their bicycles and started homeward. As they rode Dumont suggested that the carburetor must have been clogged; hence the motor would not take the gasoline.

Another night was required to take down the carburetor, clean it, and reassemble it. The second night after their first attempt to fly the three men were back at the field. Friends had been instructed to pick up the bicycles later. It was extremely doubtful whether Valentin would be able to leave with them, but in any case he could help and, if they succeeded, he could remove the traces of their escape.

The night was warm around them as they stood in the bushes. Far across the field the sentry was walking his post and a few cows lay in the grass. There was no moon, but the stars were bright in the stillness.

A sudden rumble filled the sky. One after another, searchlights flashed on and swept the darkness toward the west. Scarcely believing in the good fortune that had brought an English raid at this precise moment, the three men broke cover and dashed to the barn. Sirens were screaming and men were running, shouting, from the distant farmhouse.

Anti-aircraft guns were barking by the time they had

reached the barn. They rolled the plane out, and Valentin climbed in and tacked a map, torn out of an old atlas, to the dashboard. Dumont took his place at the controls, and Gilet swung the propeller.

The motor spat and sucked and suddenly roared into life. They cried out together in joy and in alarm lest the noise attract the Germans' attention, forgetting that bombs were bursting somewhere behind them and anti-aircraft guns were firing continuously.

Gilet jumped into the front cockpit with Valentin, and the plane began to roll over the grass. But the nose refused to rise, and a cow lay stubbornly in the path.

"Sorry, Valentin," Gilet shouted above the din. "We can't take you. You'll have to get out and chase the cows."

Dumont, in his cockpit, cried out: "Awfully sorry, old chap. Can't be helped."

Valentin grinned wryly, shook their hands, and jumped to the ground. "Good luck!" he cried, and ran to rout the obstinate cow.

Slowly and reluctantly the beast rose and wandered out of the way. The plane roared again and began to pick up speed. Valentin saw the tail begin to lift and then, even in the dark, he could discern a bit of empty space between the grass and the wheels.

As the old trainer slowly gained height Valentin found himself involuntarily wiping his eyes. Gilet and Dumont had made it. Whatever happened now, they would no longer be at the mercy of the Germans.

He trudged back to the bicycles and started homeward. But on the way he was stopped by a German road patrol that demanded his identity card.

"Where are you coming from?" one of the Germans asked.

"I was visiting a friend. I had to stop when the sirens went."

The German seemed uncertain whether to accept the ex-

planation. He flashed a light on Valentin and inspected him carefully, gazing for a long time at the mud and grass clinging to his shoes. At length the German let him go after having made a careful note of the name and number of his card.

Valentin pedaled as fast as he could until he was in Antwerp. Once at home, he gathered together a few necessities and left for Brussels.

He stayed all the next day and night with Freeman. Buchet and his wife sat with them as they speculated endlessly on the possible fate of Gilet and Dumont. The Belgian radio had announced the destruction of several planes in the previous night's raid; perhaps the fugitives' machine was among them.

At nine o'clock Freeman shut all his doors and windows and turned his radio to the BBC. The program began with the customary "*Allo! Ici Radio Belgique!*" and proceeded to give the latest war news. Then there was a pause.

"We are very fortunate," the announcer resumed, "in having with us tonight two young Belgians who have just made a daring escape from the occupied country. They landed in England last night under extraordinarily dramatic circumstances. I shall take the liberty of questioning them now to show the people of Belgium that those inside the country are fighting as hard as we are here."

Valentin was pacing nervously up and down. The interview began with the story that Valentin had told to Freeman, and then they heard the rest (which was subsequently published in an International News Service dispatch from London):

"We got up to 12,000 feet and headed south to get out of the raid area. Then we headed for England. Our homemade instruments worked perfectly and our air-speed indicator kept us out of trouble. As we passed the Belgian coast the RAF raid ended and we had no sound but the regular beat of our own motor.

"Three enemy searchlights went on as we came over the coast,

but they didn't find us and nobody fired on us. But just then the engine died and we began to lose height rapidly."

The announcer, de Laveleye, said something, rendered inaudible by Valentin's shout: "That was Jean Gilet!" Then Dumont spoke:

"I called to Jean to get our old inner tube ready. But we'd forgotten to take it. I told Jean to get out on the wing and be ready to jump as soon as we hit the water. I was trying to land so that he could fish me out. But our luck hadn't run out.

"We were only 400 feet off the water when the motor picked up again and we went up to 6,000. Jean sat down again. But not for long.

"The motor started to miss again and we began to drop. But we kept going somehow, and I tried to load the motor with more gas. All of a sudden Jean began to shout: 'Look, Jacques, land! England! We've made it!' He was crying when he pointed down to the coast. . . . And it wasn't the wind that made my eyes wet, either!"

Valentin had stopped his nervous striding to listen as if frozen. When Dumont had finished he broke into a wordless cry of jubilation.

"God, I wish I were with them!" Buchet breathed.

"When are you leaving?" Valentin asked.

"Within two days." Buchet turned to Freeman. "I'm worried about Denise's health, though. Keep an eye on her, will you, Paul? See that she takes care of herself."

"But of course, Jean. . . . How do you propose to leave now, Valentin?"

"I don't know. I'm afraid my picture's all over France."

"I have an idea," Freeman struck in. "You remember Bor-man, Jean, the fellow from La Panne who was arrested in France and repatriated? He can't go to France again; he's going to try to make it by boat. Maybe Valentin could go with him. What do you say, Val?"

"Anything's O.K. with me if it gets me out."

"Borman's wife just had a baby. Don't let him know that, though; he might do something rash."

"Good night, you fellows," Buchet interrupted. "I'm going up." Denise had left the room immediately after the British broadcast.

They said good night and resumed their conversation. Buchet was thinking of his dead daughter, condemning himself for having sacrificed her to his country. As he mounted the stairs he heard Freeman say:

"It's really tragic, Val, how this underground business admits of nothing else. Give it your hand and it takes your body—more: it takes your wife and child, if you have them. There's no escape."

Buchet went on up the stairs without hearing Valentin's answer. In their little room his wife was already asleep, breathing irregularly and with some difficulty. When he bent over to kiss her forehead his lips were repelled by cold beads of sweat.

## XVII

THE TOWN CLERK of La Hulpe received Freeman alone in his office. "I asked you to come this morning," he explained, "out of patriotism. Yesterday I was visited by a Gestapo officer who had come down here especially from Liège. He's got a reputation for brutality."

"What did he want?" Freeman asked.

"You, I think. He asked me all kinds of questions about you. He showed me a dossier he had that dealt with you. There was some question about your background. He asked whether I'd known you before the war, whether our records



showed that you were born in Ostende—innumerable things. Anyway, I thought I ought to tell you.”

“Thank you very much, sir,” Freeman smiled. “This is very interesting.”

“One other thing. I meant to tell you that when he left I saw Dr. Bratt and his man waiting for him downstairs in a car.”

Freeman repeated his thanks, lit his pipe, and left. His mind was uneasy as he walked homeward, and it was not soothed by an encounter with a gamekeeper of the neighborhood who hailed him on his way.

“Monsieur Freeman,” the man said furtively, “the Boche’s orderly’s been asking me about you. He wants to know who those people are that are staying in your house.”

“Oh, really? Thanks.”

Returned to his house, Freeman found it empty. The Buchets were probably in the back garden; Valentin had left that morning. Freeman looked out his living-room window and saw Bratt’s orderly standing in the window of the house opposite, apparently watching him. Freeman went out to the garden.

“Well, we’ve got to get out, my friends,” he greeted them. “Now.”

“What’s up?” Buchet demanded anxiously.

“I’ll tell you later. Let’s get started. We’ll go up toward Gaillemarde and then to Waterloo or Espinette. Let’s get a few things together and go.”

They returned to the house, filled their pockets with prime necessities and such money as was at hand, and slipped out through the garden gate. They walked fast and they had hardly entered the Soignes Forest when Denise slipped to the ground, exhausted for the moment. While she rested the two men discussed their next step.

“I guess I’ll have to go across France with you, Jean,” Freeman smiled.

They lingered a little longer, until Denise declared herself able to continue, and then left the woods to take a tram to Brussels. In the outskirts they turned in at a café and telephoned Chaudron, who arrived soon afterward on a bicycle. Freeman explained briefly what had happened and what he planned to do.

"But what will we do without you?" Chaudron protested.

"You will be the leader, Chaudron. You can do the job. This afternoon you will go to meet the man from whom I have had my orders up till now, a man whom you don't know. You'll find him in front of the elevators in the Grand Bazar at four o'clock.

"As for you, Jean," he continued, turning to Buchet, "I'll see you at dawn tomorrow at the Prussian Monument in Waterloo. I'll have false identity cards for us. . . . Good-by, Denise. You're a brave woman and I'm honored to have known you." He kissed her hand with some embarrassment.

Denise and Jean spent their last night at the home of another member of the Brigade. But neither slept. They sat in the room that had been given to them and tried to talk. Most of the time the conversation lagged, but occasionally Denise would give Jean some caution for his trip, some homely housewife's advice that almost made him weep.

"Don't forget to change your socks every day," she would say. "You have an extra pair in your pocket. Wash them every night when you take them off. . . . Where will you stop first?"

"At Monthermé," he replied, forcing his voice to be steady.

"And then?"

"Nouzon."

"Then where?"

Buchet shrugged.

Thus they passed the last night that they were to spend together in their ravished country. Before dawn they were

at the tram station at Le Vivier d'Oie. Though the air was warm Denise was trembling.

The car rolled round the curve toward them and Denise pressed Jean's hand. "Paul is down the platform," she whispered. Buchet did not look around at once. The car stopped.

"I'll be waiting, my dearest!" Denise sobbed suddenly. "*Vive la Belgique!*"

Buchet mounted the rear platform as from the corner of his eye he saw Freeman enter at the front. At the top step Buchet turned and lifted his arm in farewell. "Be well again when I come back," he said, and vanished inside the car.

Two days later Freeman, Buchet, and a few others with them had crossed the French frontier, following the Meuse Valley. At Revin they took a train, but, as they had been advised to do, they got off before it reached Charleville and went through the town on foot to take another train for Verdun. This stage of the journey was to be made with the group broken up; they were to be reunited that night in the waiting room in Verdun. Buchet walked with Freeman; they stopped for a few minutes in the little station at Mézières, before the square where the statue of the poet Rimbaud had been destroyed in this war as it had been in the previous one.

After they had had a brief rest and a snack to eat they set out for the main station. The Verdun train was already in and they saw their companions, singly or in pairs, inconspicuously entering different cars. Buchet was about to mount when he remembered that he had dropped his notebook in the Mézières station. Without it he could not continue. He told Freeman to wait for him on the train.

Buchet ran all the way back to Mézières. The notebook was where he had left it at the lunch counter. He retrieved it and ran back, but at the train gate a railway employee stopped him.

"I want the Verdun train," Buchet said, panting.

"Just gone."

Buchet was desperate. Without him and the notebook his companions would be lost. Their journey to England was already over. He asked the attendant when the next train would leave; he was told that he would have to wait almost a full day. Buchet went back to the waiting room, sat down, and tried to work out a plan.

He had told Freeman that they would all meet again that night in Verdun. The problem was how he was to get there in time. As he puzzled he saw a platoon of German soldiers in field kits march through. A grease-marked man beside him leaned over and muttered: "Look at that bunch of bastards! They're eating us up!"

"Are you telling me?" Buchet replied. He looked more closely at the stranger and noticed the grease on his hands. "You a railroad man?"

"Yes, a shop foreman."

"H'm." Buchet studied him again; the man seemed reliable. "I'd like to ask you something. Are you a patriot?"

The railroad man shot an endless jet of dirty saliva through his pursed lips. "That for the Boches. I'm French!"

"Good. Listen: I have to be in Verdun tonight."

"Let's see," the railroad man said reflectively. "No, it's impossible. The last train just left."

"I know, I know," Buchet replied impatiently. "This is very important. I'll tell you what it's about." Buchet knew that if he failed to reach Verdun his friends, and probably himself as well, were lost; he ran no risk now. His companion's face showed no curiosity.

"Look," Buchet whispered, "you've got to help me. I have to help some fellows who are on their way out—you know, over there."

"Joining de Gaulle?" the railroad man asked with some interest.

"Same thing. We're Belgians."

"I see. Wait here a minute; I'll be right back."

The man disappeared, and Buchet wondered whether he had been dealing with a provocator. He got up and went into the bar, where he ordered a glass of beer. Before he had finished it he saw the railroad man returning, alone. Buchet went back to join him.

"I think I can fix you up," the man said. "But it isn't going to be easy. There's no regular train till tomorrow, but you saw those Boches. They're going to Dijon; you can go with them."

"Good God, man!" Buchet protested.

"Do you want to be in Verdun tonight?" the foreman said somewhat roughly.

"Yes."

"Then you'll have to do it. Now listen to me. Go buy a ticket for Attigny—the train leaves at five-three. Of course you won't be on it. But with the ticket you can get to the trains. Go to Track 10. I'll be there with a coverall for you and I'll dirty your face and hands for you. After that we'll have to see. O.K., go get your ticket."

Buchet did as he had been told. His friend was waiting at Track 10 and handed him the coverall. "Don't be afraid," he laughed, "I'm not lousy. Put it on. And get rid of that hat."

Buchet tossed his hat under the train wheels. The foreman smeared his face and hands with a greasy cloth. "Now go over to Track 19," he said. "There's a freight train there, the one that's going to take the Boches to Dijon. Get into the locomotive cab and wait."

Remembering the day when he had delivered the bomb to Oedekerke, Buchet obeyed. He had been converted from a postman to a fireman.

There were more than twenty cars in the train on Track 19. Buchet climbed into the locomotive; the cab was empty.

Soldiers were lined up before the cars, preparatory to embarking. As Buchet leaned on the window of the cab to watch in what he hoped was a careless manner, a huge man in coveralls like his own mounted the cab.

"You the Belgian? Louis told me about you. Are you a Communist?"

"Not me," Buchet replied.

"O.K. I am. Doesn't matter, though. Say, you'll have to jump, you know."

"What do you mean?"

"We don't stop at Verdun. But there's a long curve as we come in. I'll slow down and you can hop off."

Grimy and dusty, Buchet entered the waiting room at Verdun at three o'clock next morning. Freeman and the others were asleep on the benches. Buchet woke them cautiously, and one by one they looked at him in fear, not recognizing him in his railroad clothes. When he had convinced them of his identity they laughed aloud in relief of the nervous tension that had been born of his absence.

They left Verdun early. Buchet had conferred with a Frenchman whose address had been given to him in Belgium and who advised them to take a train to Langres. There they would have to sleep in an abandoned mill, since the man who kept the relay post in Langres had just been arrested.

Borman had been kept in hiding by a brigadier in his home near La Panne since his return from France. Valentin joined him there when all the preparations had been made for their departure by boat. Borman had been almost a prisoner in the hands of the Brigade because his house was still under German surveillance. Friends had brought him word of the birth of his third child but, despite his yearning to see it, they had prevented him.

Achille, Borman's "host," accompanied him and Valentin to La Panne. They proceeded with the utmost caution, for German patrols were particularly active in this coastal area. Several times they threw themselves flat on the ground when they heard a noise. From time to time Borman whispered his eagerness to see his family once before he left. Valentin and Achille repeated again and again that he would have to see the Brigade leader first.

They entered La Panne hesitantly. Searchlights were sweeping the sky rhythmically, though there was no sign of an air raid, and the patrols were growing more numerous as the curfew hour approached. Valentin asked where the leader lived.

"On the Adinkerke road," Achille replied.

"Then let's go this way," Borman said, pointing to a side street. "It's shorter."

They turned in together; then Achille put a hand on the arm of each of the others.

"No, Borman, no! I know what you have in mind; you want to go into your old street."

"I'm only human, Achille!" Borman pleaded. "Just let me smell my own garden again. I promise I won't go in; I won't even go on the same side of the street. I'll feel stronger if I have a last look at the place."

Achille glanced questioningly at Valentin in the darkness; the latter shrugged, then nodded and nudged Achille as if to imply that they two could prevent any imprudence on the part of Borman.

The men crept on in the darkness, hardly speaking any more. They passed a block of little houses and came to two larger detached buildings. When they stopped for a moment there was no sound but the distant song of the sea. As they were about to start again the hungry wail of a baby came from the nearer of the two larger houses. Almost involuntarily Borman made as if to run across the street, but the

others were holding his arms firmly. He looked from one to the other in mute appeal; they shook their heads firmly and pulled him along.

A few minutes later they had slipped into the house of Borman's old principal in the school. The young teacher sat down heavily in a chair and buried his head in his hands. Sobs shook his big frame.

"My new son!" he said heavily. "I'll never see him! Couldn't you let me see him just once? Couldn't you let me say good-by to my wife and kids? They don't know where I am or what's going to become of me!"

"Easy, Emile," the principal soothed him. "They've been kept informed. They even know you're going to England—at least your wife knows it. She sends you her love."

## XVIII

IN LYONS, Freeman and Buchet found several hundred more Belgians, all waiting their turn to be smuggled through Spain. The city was big enough so that they could be distributed throughout its area, each billeted in some patriot's home, instead of being concentrated in a single district and thus made conspicuous to the Vichy police. Philippe, a former deputy, had arranged a secret organization of supply and transport that functioned with a thoroughness and efficiency that rivaled the Germans' in less humane fields.

Buchet and Freeman and their companions made their way with intolerable delays to Marseilles, the lodestone of all those who were escaping the Germans. Marseilles had changed tremendously since Buchet had last seen the city, two years before. The cafés were full of fugitives who would vanish in a split second just before a party of police swept



into the places in search of some poor hunted devil. At Basso's and the Verdun Tavern the tables were thronged with the profiteers and traitors who were making a few francs out of the German shadow that hung over the country.

Buchet soon found the Frenchman who was charged with expediting the journeys of fleeing Belgians, as well as his compatriots. He was a white-haired man who had been a banker before the war; though he could have fled, he had stayed to devote himself to freeing his country. Because of his age and his connections he had been assigned to the work of assisting fugitives. He found houses where they could stay until it was time for them to start the next stage of their journeys and provided them with forged papers and money, some of which came from his own resources and the rest of which was raised by contribution.

One day when Freeman and Buchet were in the banker's house he announced that he was awaiting another traveler, an aviator named Herman. The name evoked nothing in their minds, but when a tall, gaunt man entered the room he made at once for Buchet.

"What the hell are you doing here? I thought you were in Belgium," he greeted Buchet in amazement.

"I was, and I thought you were out of here." Buchet was no less amazed at the sight of the sergeant with whom he had returned to France two years before.

The new arrival turned to the banker, and Buchet took the opportunity to explain their acquaintance to Freeman. "Herman" was in reality Sergeant Marion, who, like himself, had been arrested in Casablanca and sent back to France. When Marion had finished his discussion with the banker he joined the others.

"I was sent back to Africa," he said, "and put in a labor camp. For ten months I built roads—you can't imagine how lousy those labor camps in Africa are—until I escaped. I spent almost a year dodging around Algeria until I could get

back here. Now I hope to go to Spain—it's the shortest route to London and de Gaulle."

Buchet interrogated Marion on the others who had been with them in Casablanca. Offenberg and Reval, he knew, had got to Gibraltar and then to England, but the rest had been less fortunate. One was dead of disease; another was in prison; a third had been shot. Questioned in return, Buchet told how he had spent the interval since they had last met and how so many of his companions had been executed.

"I've often wondered," Marion said when he had finished, "how those guys had the guts to do it."

"Sacrifice is the privilege of the weak," Freeman said.

"I don't know," Buchet said; "isn't that a little grand? I'm just fighting for my country—and for my wife."

"That's not so," Freeman retorted. "You had both. There's something else."

"I know there is, but what is it?"

"You're both too high-brow," Marion interrupted. "The average man doesn't have to think about all that stuff. Christ! I've seen them from all over Europe—guys in the Legion, Spanish Loyalists, French prisoners—they were just desperate and beaten. Those fellows had fought for ideas and never got anywhere. I've heard them, out in the broiling bled, making plans to get away and fight again. They never needed any big words."

Freeman and Buchet were somewhat abashed. The three of them left soon afterward.

On their next visit to the banker the latter handed Buchet a letter that had come for him. It bore no postmark save the prints of many fingers; when he opened it he saw that the date was already long ago.

MY DEAREST,

I am very proud of you. This is all very hard for both of us, but it must be done. I am taking good care of myself, and the doctor

said yesterday that I was doing very well. I understand Val got home all right, so he'll probably be waiting for you.

Some of our friends have been so ill that they had to be taken to the hospital, though they didn't want to go. There were guests the other night and some fool walked off with my boiler—the only one I had for my washing.

After my visit to the doctor yesterday I went to Anne's grave. It was the nearest I could come to being with you. I was there a long time.

Take care of yourself and be strong. I love you.

DENISE

Buchet was ashamed of the moisture in his eyes and wiped it away brusquely with the back of his hand.

"A letter from Denise," he told Freeman. "If she means what I think she does, Valentin and Borman have left for England and some of the others have been arrested, including Chaudron—she says her boiler's been taken away." ("Boiler," in French, is "*chaudron*.")

"Anything else?"

"No, that's all." Buchet swallowed abruptly.

A month later Buchet was in London. He went immediately to the Belgian government's offices in Eaton Place, where he was closely questioned on his own identity and on the strength of the underground. But here he was glad to be questioned; when a cigarette was offered to him it was not followed by a blow; when he spoke his mind he had no need to fear punishment or to whisper.

Buchet reveled in the freedom that for two years had been a myth. But he was eager to get back into the war and he applied for service with the Belgian squadron of the RAF. Before he could go on active duty he had to submit to a fresh training course, after the years of inactivity, and he had to be fed back to vigorous health. Yet he could never eat his meal without thinking of his wife who must always

be hungry and his child who had died because she could not get enough to eat. The thought inflamed him: he must the sooner be ready to strike new blows against the people who had brought this agony on his country and his family.

When at last he was assigned to his airdrome he found a few old friends and many strangers. Reval, a lieutenant in the RAF with the word "Belgium" on his shoulder, greeted him with incredulity and demanded a full account of his escape and of the events that had preceded it. As soon as Reval gave him the opportunity Buchet asked for Offenbergl.

"Shot down," Reval replied briefly.

"No! Jean Offenbergl?"

"Yes. He was shot down over England. But he'd done a damned good job! He had five certain German planes and several probables. He got the DFC and our Croix de Guerre. Then they got him. He was buried in January."

Reval took Buchet to the quasi-club where the Belgian squadron spent its leisure. In a frame on the wall was the telegram that the Minister of Defense had sent to the squadron when Offenbergl was buried.

"That was hung there in January," Reval said. "In the last few months we've had more."

Buchet nodded. "Have you heard anything of Valentin?"

"Valentin? Who's that?"

"Of course," Buchet apologized, "you wouldn't know him by that name—it's the alias he used in the Brigade. His name is Romain Baillieul; he was with the air force in '40. He must have come over with Borman."

"Sorry, Baillieul doesn't mean anything to me either. Who's the other one, Borman? I think I read something about him somewhere. Why don't you try the Belgian Receiving Home?"

The following Sunday Buchet went to London. He was appalled by the extent of the damage that had been inflicted by the German air raids and thrilled when he thought of the

people of the island who still stood up indomitably to the Germans. He took the bus that Reval had told him of and dismounted near the Margaret Biddle Home. He introduced himself to Anne de Bousies, the nurse sent by the government to take charge, and asked for Emile Borman and Romain Baillieul.

"There's no one here named Baillieul," Mlle. de Bousies replied, "but Emile Borman is on our list. I don't know whether he's awake, though; I'll have to find out."

She sent an orderly, who soon returned to lead Buchet to Borman's room. A vase of lilacs stood beside the bed where the teacher lay, his face only a shade less white than the sheets. He greeted Buchet with joy. Mlle. de Bousies, who had followed Buchet, warned the men not to talk too much, for Borman was still weak.

"How did you get out?" the teacher asked.

"That was nothing," Buchet smiled. "How did you and Val do it? By the way, is he here?"

"He was killed on the way," Borman said somberly. "He wasn't the only one!" There was a momentary flash of color in his face, and Buchet remembered the warning.

"You're getting excited, old man," he warned. "Try to take it easy—or you can tell me another time."

"I know, I have to rest—and I hate it. Look, Buchet—in the inside pocket of my coat in the closet there's a little journal I kept on the way. You read it while I rest."

Buchet took a schoolboy's notebook out of the teacher's coat and settled himself in a chair while Borman closed his eyes.

SATURDAY: Everything was ready; the motor was O.K. and we had food and water for two days in the boat, with gasoline and oil stolen from the Germans and a little sail. The boat was only a twelve-footer and it lay only about twenty yards from a German sentry. We started creeping out to it about 9 P.M. It took us three hours to push it to the water, pushing only when the sentry wasn't

looking. It was midnight when we got it afloat. We rowed about two hours in a northerly direction to get as far out of earshot as possible before starting the motor. There was not much room for the five of us, but it was better when we could start the motor and put up the sail. But after three-quarters of an hour the motor stopped and we had to row again. We heard British planes over the sea and we could see German searchlights looking for them and bombs falling, and explosions on the coast.

SUNDAY: A Junkers bomber flew over us about 2 P.M. and we ducked to the bottom of the boat, but we couldn't tell whether he'd seen us. Anyway, nothing happened. About a half-hour later four Messerschmitts came over, circled us, and swept down and machine-gunned us. A sailor from Antwerp jumped overboard to escape, but they spotted him, and in a minute or two the water was red and he was dead. Another man was shot in the head, badly, and then in the body. They used explosive bullets that made large holes. One of the fellows stood up in the bow and waved a white handkerchief, but the Germans just kept on firing and caught him in the back. The fourth man was hit in the arm and the head. Then the planes went away. I thought I'd been hit, too, because I'd heard the bullets crashing right behind me, but I was lucky—they hadn't touched me, even though my overcoat was shredded.

There were twenty-seven holes in the boat and we were sinking fast. The mast was broken in a dozen places. I stopped the holes with cork and cloth and then looked after the others. Two of them were gone, but the one who was wounded in the arm I bandaged and stopped his bleeding. The boat was full of pieces of cloth and wood and flesh, and our food supply was ruined. One man died about 6 P.M. after roaring for hours and crying for his family, and I buried him in the sea.

MONDAY and TUESDAY: We're still in sight of the Belgian coast. I row day and night. Another man died during the night.

WEDNESDAY: Storm. We just lay in the bottom of the boat, virtually at the end of our rope.

THURSDAY and FRIDAY: Storm kept up. Terribly hungry and thirsty. Passed out; the other man's arm kept bleeding. Could think only of water and drank sea water—horrible. Then we found an unharmed tube of tooth paste and shared it. Feet frozen.

FRIDAY NOON: Sea calm again. Tried to catch gulls—no luck. In a daze most of the time. We don't talk or even think, except for the awful thirst, like burning up inside. We heard a plane and set fire to a gasoline tin filled with waste, to signal it. But the boat caught fire. We put it out and waited—nothing.

FRIDAY-SATURDAY NIGHT: No suffering any more—no feeling—not even hoping.

SATURDAY: Awakened by gunfire. Speedboats fighting on horizon. One went off and we waved a white shirt, tied to the one oar left. Boat came up with guns trained on us, but we shouted: "Belgium!" They threw rope and pulled us aboard. We collapsed right away. They gave us first water in six days and cut clothes off us with scissors, we were so swollen.

Borman was asleep when Buchet closed the stained notebook. The flier left on tiptoe and rejoined Mlle. de Bousies in her office. "Is he going to be all right?" he asked anxiously.

"It'll take a long time," she replied evasively. "Will you be in London Tuesday?"

"Why?"

Mlle. de Bousies handed him a black-bordered card. "Come if you possibly can," she urged; "he certainly won't be able to."

The card read: "Belgian Church, Arlington Road, Camden Town. Sunday, at twelve o'clock, a Mass will be said for the repose of the souls of Romain Baillieul, Adhémar O., and companion, killed at sea and buried in the waves while escaping from occupied Belgium in a rowboat."

Buchet promised to attend if he could get leave. Accompanying him to the door, Mlle. de Bousies asked: "Why did they give Baillieul's name in full, half of the other one, and none at all for the third?"

"Because Baillieul was a hero of whom we shall always be proud! It's too early to tell how much he did for the White Brigade, but since he had no family, there's no harm in revealing that he was the man who called himself Valentin in

the Brigade. As for Adhémar O., I imagine he must still have a family at home. The third man probably was tied up with some secret military matters."

"I see. . . . It must be horrible to die that way, without anything to leave behind except the loyalty of the living."

"Yes. And it isn't pleasant to think of the wife and kids who'll go on hoping for months that Adhémar is safe. That's another kind of heroism that we don't hear much about."

Something in his voice caught her attention. "Are you married?" Mlle. de Bousies asked in a low voice.

"Yes. My wife's waiting too. The Boches killed our little girl. But they'll pay—and I'll see my wife again."

A soldier swung by on crutches on his way to the garden. "He was wounded at Saint-Nazaire," Mlle. de Bousies said after he had passed.

A passing newsboy shouted the headlines: "Ruhr city bombed! Commandos raid France!" Buchet and the nurse stood in silence, thinking of the vast world-wide effort that was being made for victory and of the millions in Yugoslavia, in Czechoslovakia, in Poland, in Holland, in Belgium, in France, who were paying. As if he sensed that Mlle. de Bousies was thinking as he was, Buchet turned to her.

"It has to be this way," he said. "When my daughter was alive I thought I was fighting for her. Now she's dead and I'm still fighting. Some call it patriotism—a word to explain the unexplainable. I love my country, but I think that the real strength of all of us who've fought comes from nothing but simple self-respect. We must show ourselves worth saving from the agony that's fallen on us."

"Yes," Mlle. de Bousies agreed, "we must be worthy. But you'll see your wife again; victory won't be long. But I can't help thinking of all those who died convinced that there was no hope and unable to bear the idea of not being free any more. . . .

"*Au revoir, mon lieutenant.* I have to go back to my job,



to your friend Borman. Men like him have done enough already for victory—their example will do the rest!”

## XIX

CERTAIN DOCUMENTS fell one day into the hands of the Geheime Feldpolizei, and several members of the White Brigade, assigned to work with the clandestine press, were arrested as a result. Among them was the sculptor Wolf.

In a recent issue of a popular magazine, John Cobler reported an event that seemed of no great intrinsic significance to the casual reader. On August 15, 1940, the Governor General of occupied Belgium, (Alexander von Falkenhausen (hated nephew of an accursed uncle who had practiced the same official cruelties in 1915), was relaxing in his office when a sergeant knocked, entered, and stood at attention before the general. On a silver tray he offered a perfumed envelope; then he clicked his heels and left. Von Falkenhausen slit the envelope and drew out some printed matter. At the top of the first sheet he read:

*August 15, 1940. Please pass this paper along—No. 1*

### FREE BELGIUM

NEW WARTIME SERIES

*Founded August 15, 1940*

Editorial and Business  
Offices

Editor in Chief

Oberfeldkommandatur,  
1 Place du Trône, Brussels  
Peter Pan  
Jardin d'Egmont, Brussels.

Immediately beneath its masthead the newly revived underground paper contained quotations from King Albert,

Burgomaster Max, and Cardinal Mercier; these were followed by the statements of their successors, King Léopold, Burgomaster van de Meulebroeke, and Msgr. van Roey. Both sets of quotations amply demonstrated the continuity of Belgian patriotism in its firm opposition to the occupying power; at the same time, the revival of the paper showed irrefutably that, if Belgium's will to independence and freedom of action were eternal, the Germans were no less unchanged in their savagery and their tyranny.

Von Falkenhausen immediately turned the matter over to the Gestapo chief for Belgium, Kammerstein, and to one Reeder, who was in charge of civil affairs. The Governor General was not ignorant of history; he knew that his uncle, Friedrich von Falkenhausen, who had held the same post, had been plagued by the regular publication of that same little paper, *La Libre Belgique*.

The story of its first appearance in the other war was well known. An exquisitely pretty young woman, with eager eyes and lips that seemed a token of willingness, had approached a sentry on duty before the Kommandatur, situated in 1915 at the Commercial Court, Place Royale. The girl smiled at the soldier and persuaded him to call his sergeant, to whom she handed a perfumed blue envelope to be delivered to the elder von Falkenhausen, with the adjuration that it must be seen by him alone, for it was of a most intimate nature.

From that day on the Governor General received a copy of the paper each morning. In those times it professed to be published from a cellar garage. One morning the general came to breakfast to find, on the front page, a composite photograph that showed him reading the journal! All this must have been forcefully brought back to his nephew's mind in 1940.

Certainly the leaders of the White Brigade remembered the past, not without a certain pride. Men had been found in other days to pay their debt to their country through

long years in prison; today there were others willing to make the same sacrifice.

In the First World War there had been some of these clandestine journalists who had had to die for their work. When Philippe Baucq was arrested he had at hand a large bundle of papers that he was about to deliver. As he went downstairs to answer the policemen's ring his daughter, who had heard the German voices, thought to save her father by tossing the forbidden literature through a side window. But this proved fatal, for the bundle had fallen on the head of a German sentry on guard in the garden.

At that time the clandestine press had also occupied itself with helping soldiers escape to fight again—a task that brought Edith Cavell to the firing squad. Called to trial on both charges, Baucq had told the judge presiding: "I should have been a criminal if I had been indifferent to the agony of my country." He was condemned to death. But the death of one of its prime movers had not interrupted the publication of the paper; a letter addressed to von Bissing, the successor of the first von Falkenhausen, had made plain the unbreakable determination of the Belgians to be deterred by nothing:

You may rob us, imprison us, even kill us; you can never silence us. . . . Our voice is the voice of all the mothers, the widows, the children who weep for those whom they have lost. That voice will not be still until the last German, soldier or spy, has left the country, invaded as it was in contravention of every right.

The Huns' methods, in those days, were similar—as Wilhelm II was the precursor of Hitler—to the police savagery and the judicial brutality of the Germans of 1940. This time Kammerstein had systematized his technique and had given free rein to the barbarous potential of his operatives. Death became almost inevitably the penalty for those who, in any capacity, had anything to do with the production or

distribution of the paper; in a few months its clamor had so risen that von Falkenhausen extended the punishment to its readers when discovered.

*Belgium Unvanquished*, by Roger Metz, told how many arrests had been made in this vain endeavor to dam the current of popular resistance. For example:

In July 1941 sixteen residents of Liège were condemned by the German military court for having edited, published, and distributed clandestine papers and pamphlets. Among them were Louis Haye, 27, a Red Cross employee; Hubert Hottenmarks, 36, and Jean Humblet, each of whom was sentenced to five years in prison; Pierre Heyberger, 45, six years at hard labor; Jeanne Wappaerts, one year; Hélène Heyberger, 25, four years; Marguerite Lang, 36, nine months; Simone Princhier, 20, six months; Pierre Buchène, 46, ten months; Jean Julsonnet, lawyer and president of the Liège Red Cross, twenty-five years.

But then the scale of punishment had swiftly risen. Two members of the Brigade in Flanders were sentenced to death as distributors of pamphlets. Such severity was answered with a great increase in the number of underground newspapers, which Belgians read to the complete exclusion of the German publications that lay untouched on the stands.

At one time there were three papers, each of which called itself *La Libre Belgique*. This overlapping disappeared when the White Brigade had had time to centralize this aspect of resistance; the other papers had been founded by isolated groups who had then no means of co-ordinating their activities with those of others. Yet, despite this, *La Libre Belgique* retained over a quarter-century of silence the prestige that it had had from the beginning, as William L. Shirer testified in his *Saga of the Underground Press*.

The very multiplicity of secret publications, of course, complicated the problem of their circulation and presented a certain handicap to the full union of all movements and

their members. At the beginning of 1943 it was reliably estimated that there were more than 150 such publications in Belgium. No one can pay adequate tribute to the unknown heroes of the press who made themselves the voice of tasks to be accomplished for their country's liberty.

The unwavering firmness of *La Libre Belgique* inspired patriotism even in those who, from cowardice or laziness, had held back from resistance. Its influence was so great that when the Germans sought to repeat their labor enslavement of 1914 the remnants of Belgian officialdom stumbled over the expression of their antipathy and *La Libre Belgique* had to formulate and apply the code by which these representatives of former authority should govern themselves. In June 1941 the paper said:

In 1916 our eternal protectors carried off a great number of our workmen to Germany. Cardinal Mercier protested vigorously to Governor von Bissing against this violation of engagements "solemnly subscribed" to by the Reich.

Today it would appear that our workmen are "voluntarily" accepting such employment. In order to put an end to this nonsense, which the traitor press is pleased to disseminate at regular intervals, we cite below: (1) the contents of a letter addressed by Secretary General Plisnier to his colleague, Verwilghen, on September 23, 1940; (2) extracts from the report made by Dr. Schultze, Oberkriegswaltungsrat for Belgium, to the directors of the various Belgian placement agencies last January 17 . . .

Thus, from the beginning, *La Libre Belgique* organized the strategy for this problem, which, quite properly, the paper attacked from the standpoint of legality and humanity. Thus it offered an excellent foundation on which to build the whole policy of resistance. Later, the paper devoted long articles to the accusations that Léopold, the royal prisoner, lodged with the proper authorities, and it paid tribute to the

effective intervention of the bishops. Early in 1943, having laid the groundwork for the co-ordination of the groups of resistance, *La Libre Belgique* said:

We hope that all the authorities will understand—we cannot repeat it too often—that the time for secret protests, silent and futile, has passed; that, in the present circumstances, our working class has every right to expect from all its leaders, political, administrative, and judicial, complete moral and material assistance. Certainly the best form of protest is public protest, whatever the consequences. This has become a social duty wherein everyone must bear his share of responsibility.

This remarkable patriotic co-ordination produced results. It was the touchstone, the appeal to conscience, that brought the hesitant and the cautious to action. As the impulses of resistance spread, men outdid their fellows in protesting, and little by little the whole country rose, unshakable in its opposition to the barbarous deportations.

Today all the various groups of the population enjoy complete solidarity in their collective measures. The dignity of their anguished demands is enhanced by masterpieces of logic infused with a profound sense of patriotism. Some of these latter were prepared by the Court of Cassation, in complete disregard of German military punishments, thanks to the attorney general, Hayoit de Termicourt, and by the Bar Association in a memorable petition signed by its president, Braffort.

This one example is sufficient to show the value of the underground press. How much this effect must have been multiplied since by the concerted action of almost two hundred journals that fight beside *La Libre Belgique*. Most of these are published in French, the rest in Flemish. Some are limited to certain groups, such as railway men or miners; others are put out by women who are able to play a large

part in this work. They write, print, and distribute these papers, which are addressed to the feminine mind. A London newspaper, paying tribute to their courage, said:

To bring out their paper, these brave women risk more than death and are compelled to live a strange, subterranean life, gathering every night in fearful places.

The manifold difficulties of printing, of preparation, of purchasing paper, and of circulating the journals make this one of the most dangerous enterprises of the resistance movement. Obviously, since thousands of copies are printed, it is not hard for the Gestapo to track down a reader and, through him, to find the way back to the distributor and at length to the editors themselves.

Nevertheless, the solidarity that links the various groups and, above all, the help of the White Brigade are so powerful that arrests have never succeeded in silencing any of these publications. Hundreds and hundreds of patriots are involved: some know who are the anonymous distributors; others have learned how to get contributions, subscriptions, and even advertisements. Some papers publish regular acknowledgments that demonstrate the public support that they enjoy. For example, in May 1943 there was the following item:

1000 thanks to S de S. 1000 thanks to Porte-Mine. 500 Here's How. 1000 and 250 thanks for Russian heroism. 2000 thanks to Bertrand. 1000 V.M.W. I'm Going, 700. Thank you, Counselors, 500. 500 Sport Shirts.

The monetary unit employed is probably the belga, which is worth five francs. Thus we see that the contributions for one biweekly number are only slightly less than 35,000 francs. The notation "Thank you, Counselors, 500" obviously alludes to the gift of a group of lawyers. In December 1942 *La Libre Belgique* announced:

We wish to thank all those who have helped us—each to the best of his abilities—in getting out our paper; and we request all our subscribers to be good enough to renew their subscriptions as soon as possible and to have the kindness, too, to set their own price in their discretion. Everyone knows how to get the money to us.

After *La Libre Belgique*, the most important of the clandestine papers are *The Belgian*, *The Voice of the Belgians*, *The People*, *The Peasant*, *The Red Flag*, *Combat*, *The Undeclared*, *The Voice of the Women*, *Labor*, *Under the Heel*, *Gunfire*, *The Brabançonne*, *Union Makes Strength*. The major Flemish organs are *Vry*, *Hier Uylenspiegel*, *De Vrye Schutter*, *Ons Vaderland*, *De Roode Vaan*, and *Belgie Vry*.

The sculptor Wolf was arrested by the Gestapo while he was distributing one of these journals. He was a married man in his thirties who had first studied medicine at the University of Brussels, but his attention had early been shifted to sculpture. In the course of his artistic career he had done a fine bust of the minister Pholien and finished the bas-relief of a group dedicated to Breughel that had been installed in the Rue Wynants behind the Palace of Justice.

Wolf, who was a Jew, had served at the front as a lieutenant in the Belgian army. Later he joined the White Brigade and worked assiduously with *The Voice of the Belgians*. No serious charge could be lodged against him, but he was sent to a concentration camp in Germany, where he died.

This and similar incidents created certain difficulties for Chaudron in Brussels. The *Geheime Feldpolizei* had succeeded in unearthing the "offices" of *The Belgian*. They descended suddenly on the place one day, but those present had been apprised in advance and escaped as the police were turning into their street.

Kammerstein's men had found the nest, but the birds had gone. The Germans' anger spent itself on a stock of paper



and a duplicating machine, but, to their amazement, the next number appeared on schedule with the following note:

Our readers will be glad to learn that, with its customary stupidity, the Gestapo, although it has upset our plans and wrecked our offices, has not succeeded in depriving us of our arms—that is, our pens—but instead it worked out its fury, with characteristic savagery, on innocent victims. . . .

But the game was becoming dangerous. Certain men who had played too prominent a part in this secret journalism would have to disappear from the front lines and be replaced by others. It was the task of Chaudron and some colleagues in the Brigade to prepare painstakingly for their departure through France and Spain.

At this time Chaudron learned, almost fortuitously, that a German agent—a former associate of that Fervin who had been executed as a traitor by the White Brigade—had worked his way into a group that was publishing one of the papers. For a month he had been intimately connected with it, trying to learn all the ramifications of the organization. There was no time to lose, and Chaudron sought out the leader of the group, Guillaume.

As soon as it was dark Chaudron started for Guillaume's house. But he had hardly entered the street when he sensed something unusual. Before every house people stood talking quietly. He insinuated himself into one such conversation and learned that Guillaume had been arrested that afternoon. He was too late.

Passing the house of the friend whom he had hoped to save, he saw the German guards outside in civilian clothes. The next morning the German papers announced that the Gestapo had at last succeeded in tracking down a dangerous gang of plotters who had the insolence to publish an anti-German journal.

The trial lasted several weeks; it was apparent that all

the evidence presented by the prosecution had been gathered by the traitor who had joined the group. The fate of the defendants was certain.

In England a few months ago one of the services at the Church of Our Lady of Hal, in Camden Town, was dedicated to the memory of the executed Belgians. Speakers related the heroic deeds of the members of the underground and told of the secret papers. Prime Minister Pierlot was present and, urged to address the congregation, he went into greater detail, descanting on the courage shown by Guillaume and his colleagues in their work. He told of the final day of their trial:

"After the informer whose treason had brought them there had finished testifying, a girl among the accused rose and cried: 'I'd rather be where I am than in your place!'

"When sentence had been imposed she and her companions began to sing the 'Brabançonne.' Without a word, the officials of the German court-martial rose and stood at attention to hear the anthem that is forbidden in all Belgium.

"On the other side of the doors a crowd of lawyers and spectators had gathered at the foot of the monument to the Bar Association's dead to listen. A moment later, an eyewitness has told us, the condemned began to march out of the courtroom. Looking at them, everyone had the same certainty that the victors were those who wore the manacles and the conquered those who, gun in hand, escorted them."

## XX

CHAUDRON was no longer Chaudron. His alias had been changed to Luc. With Freeman and Buchet gone, the life of the underground had not changed. The regular tasks and meetings continued. One April evening Luc arrived early

at the meeting place and sat down to smoke and think of the execution that lay ahead.

Of all the occupied countries, Belgium has had the fewest traitors. Here and there an occasional wretch sold himself; only one was of any importance: Paul Colin. A year before, the White Brigade had failed in its attempt to kill him as he stepped out of the car that the Germans had given him.

In all the countries under German tyranny the leading traitors are threatened and hated, but they are too well guarded by German henchmen for patriots to reach them. Laval, Doriot, Déat, Quisling, Mussert live in the shadow of the German power and enjoy their precarious existences only behind the barricade of German bayonets.

Colin was one of these Judases, living through crime as others live through oxygen. During the other war he had been a traitor, but military justice, which scorns the petty, had spared him. After his return to Belgium he had founded, in 1919, a review called *Free Art*, to which all the great defeatists of the world contributed. At that time he was a Communist. But Communism did not pay him well. He had written of his desire to see Belgium destroyed; he had lavished gutter denunciations on King Albert, Cardinal Mercier, and Burgomaster Max; he had reviled the victorious generals and the flag of his country.

Immediately after the Armistice he had traveled over Germany, making contacts with people of his own kind. A bloated man with a head like a little white finger, pallid and blistered, surrounded by curls like those of a Jacobin of the Year VIII, his eyes shifting rapidly behind thick glasses, he had offered his wares to every government. Publication in French having been refused to him, he had tried to be accepted in Mussolini's Italy and, desperate for a cause—a living verification of Renan's aphorism: "The best way to be right once is to change constantly"—he had become a hypernationalist, this man who, a few years before, had cried

his hope of living long enough to see his beloved Germany impose a cruel peace on Belgium.

A few fools—and knaves—had been taken in by him and patronized him. Every day he lunched at the Royale, surrounded by his creatures. Fernand Neuray, who had resisted the Germans steadfastly during the First World War, showed him some friendship and brought him into his own paper, *The Belgian Nation*.

But even before the Second World War began in 1939, Colin had been in the service of Hitler. When the war came he put at the enemy's disposal the paper that he had founded, *Cassandra*. He praised the generosity of Hitler and his fellows and launched his poisoned arrows at Chamberlain and Churchill. Finding new depths when Hitler invaded Norway, he congratulated his patron on this latest act of heroism.

May 10, 1940, arrived. The Belgian government, well aware of Colin's activities, arrested him. Sent to France and held at the camp of Vernet, then released through the intervention of powerful friends, he next appeared at Poitiers with a passport that was to take him to Switzerland and then to Germany.

When the armistice was signed Colin was the first to return to Brussels. The Germans knew that they could rely on him. They had vainly tried to find some representative man to help them establish the New Order in Belgium; to the eternal glory of the country, in default of a Laval, a Darlan, a Doriot, a Déat, they had to fall back on the puppet Colin.

This man with a chewing-gum conscience, who had defrauded his tradesmen all his life, could find no better way to show his eternal ingratitude than to steal the paper of his old benefactor, Neuray. Thus, in October, 1940, he published the first number of *The New Journal* with the help of a few untalented men who, like himself, had turned to Germany, the haven of French writers without French audiences.

All this, of course, was well known to Luc, who was reviewing the unsavory facts when Xavier arrived with the news that Colin's movements had been carefully watched for some time. It was his custom to go each morning to *The New Journal*, on the Place de Brouckhère; he lunched at the Royale, usually as the guest of some German, and then went to the office of *Cassandra* in the Rue Montagne de la Cour.

His route varied. Some days he went through the Galeries Saint-Hubert to the Rue de la Madeleine and then to the Rue Montagne de la Cour; other times he went round by the Palais des Beaux-Arts. Usually he was alone; though the Germans had given him a bodyguard, he made little use of the man.

"Do you think we could catch him between the Royale and *Cassandra*?" Luc asked.

"Yes, it would be easy, but——"

"But what?"

"It would be too dangerous in daylight."

"What do you suggest, then?"

"Well," Xavier replied, "ordinarily Colin spends the whole afternoon at *Cassandra*——"

"Why couldn't we get him there?" Luc interrupted.

"That would be impossible. In 1939 our friend Herman Closson tried it, just to punch him. Since then Colin has taken precautions; he's well guarded."

"Well, then, what are we to do?"

"Colin leaves his office between five and six every afternoon and goes home—he lives in the Place Frère Orban. By that time—have you noticed?—it's already beginning to be dark. If we want to pull it off under the most favorable circumstances we mustn't wait. In another month it'll be light till seven o'clock."

Four other members had arrived. One, a blond man, had adopted Buchet's first alias, Souci; the second, a handsome young man who seemed to be about twenty-five years old,

was known as Boulanger; the third, somewhat older, called himself Serrurier. The fourth was a boy in his teens who used the name of Concorde. No others were to come that day; these were the men who were planning the execution of Paul Colin.

Xavier had drawn a map of the Place Royale and the Rue Montagne de la Cour, with the position and task of each man marked. Concorde's sole assignment was to keep watch, but, like the others, he would be armed for any emergency. When Colin left the office he was to be allowed to cross the street and turn the corner, while Souci hid close by. Boulanger and Serrurier were to stand behind him, both to protect him and eventually to assist him. Concorde was to watch the entrance to *Cassandra* and, when Colin came out, to move off in the opposite direction to avoid rousing his suspicions.

At the same time he was to signal to Souci, who would walk out with his revolver ready in his pocket, timing himself to get the man just after he had turned the corner. As soon as the shot had been fired they were all to disappear, preferably running toward the Palais de Justice, for there were usually few people in the Rue de la Régence at that hour and they could easily get to the Rue de Rollebeek, where they would be safe. All were warned that if anything untoward occurred they were not to return to their homes but to go to an address in Waterloo that would be given to them, and from there, step by step, they would be guided into France and eventually to England.

The four men asked a few questions and made sure that all details had been clarified. They agreed to meet on April 14 at the entrance of the Old England Shops on the Place Royale.

Arnaud Fraiteur was called Concorde only because he lived in the Rue de la Concorde, near the entrance to the Avenue

Louise, with his parents. The son of a wealthy broker, he was only eighteen years old. He had tried to join the Brigade much earlier by falsifying his age.

In the winter of 1938-39 he had been a pupil at the Atheneum of Uccle, where the headmaster, Peters, had the highest hopes for him. In 1940 he had fled with his parents to France, but after the collapse the family had returned to Brussels and Arnaud had resumed his studies. The Brigade had refused to admit him because of his age; the time that must pass until he would be old enough was interminable to him. When at last he was admitted he was enrolled on condition that he would leave the country as soon as possible to enlist with the forces in Britain.

In September, 1942, his father wanted to send him to the University. But that in Brussels had been closed by the Germans, and Arnaud was registered at the University of Liège. For him it was drudgery; a country in irons, he thought, had no need of scholars. He thought only of the work of the Brigade, and his irregular hours troubled his mother, who reproached him with neglecting his studies for some girl.

Arnaud did not attempt to enlighten her. He wanted no deterrent. Many of his friends had already got out, returning from London sometimes to drop bombs on the Germans. At the Atheneum of Uccle, in the old park of Wolvendael, the one topic of conversation among the students had been the chances of fleeing. At the university it was the same.

The Brigade had made arrangement for his flight. The address in Waterloo had been given to him and he had had to learn by heart the names of the daily stops thereafter. Luc and Xavier had the letter that he had asked them to give his parents after his departure.

Boulanger and Serrurier were equally well prepared. The Brigade had given the three men a large sum of money for their journey; Souci was to remain awhile.

April 14 was an endless day. Early in the afternoon Arnaud kissed his mother with a tenderness that astonished her and left to walk slowly toward the Place Royale. The sky was leaden above the city; on the sidewalks emaciated men and women shivered in the wind that seemed to bring back the recently departed winter.

Serrurier was waiting outside the Old England Shops, his foot tapping meditatively. Arnaud shook his hand and stood beside him. It was four-thirty. A quarter-hour later Boulanger arrived. Occasional pedestrians were going up toward the Montagne de la Cour. As the darkness deepened blinds and shutters were closed, as the Germans had ordered, to conceal lights within.

At five-thirty Souci had not yet appeared. They were all impatient for the arrival of the man who was actually to fire the shot, but obviously he was not coming. The others could not decide what to do; Serrurier was doubtful of the success of a job that had begun so inauspiciously.

"Nothing stops us from getting ready just as if Souci were going to be a little late," Arnaud urged them. "This may be our last chance. Anyway, Serrurier, you can take Souci's place." No one answered; it was quite dark and lonely now. "Come on," Arnaud resumed; "let's take our posts. Even if we don't do anything, it's a good rehearsal."

He crossed the street and turned, to see his friends take up their ambush in the deeper shadows. His head turned constantly from left to right, to watch for Colin and to see whether the appointed executioner would appear. Then he walked on and came back to gesture inquiringly; with a wave Boulanger and Serrurier indicated that Souci was still missing.

Arnaud was panting as his hand tightened in his pocket over the butt of his revolver. But he was only to watch. Suddenly a door creaked; he turned and saw a figure in the momentarily lighted aperture. It spoke and was followed by



another. The one was Colin; he could tell that the man was wearing glasses. The other, who seemed to be wearing a coat of military cut, must have been his bodyguard, who would be fully armed. Arnaud remembered that he and the others had been ordered not to act if they found the situation different from what they had expected.

He let Colin and the bodyguard pass him, then followed them slowly, making the agreed signal to Serrurier and Boulanger. Souci was still not with them; had he lost his nerve? As Colin and his companion came abreast of the brigadiers Arnaud waited for them to shoot, but there was silence.

Colin and the German went on; Arnaud followed them irresistibly. He motioned to Serrurier and Boulanger to be quiet. His quarry was a score of yards from him, and he hastened a little, until he had halved the distance. Once the bodyguard looked back, but he saw only a youth on the sidewalk.

Arnaud had almost overtaken the two men; he moved out to the left to pass by the bodyguard. Now was the time. He leveled his revolver and pulled the trigger. Somehow he did not hear the report, but he saw the German fall in a heap.

Colin whirled, crying for mercy. "Not for a Hun!" Arnaud shouted, and he shot again. The traitor fell and the boy fled.

Though his nervous tension might have deafened him to the sound of the shots, others had heard them. Police whistles shrilled in the night and automobiles appeared from nowhere. With marvelous speed they formed a loose cordon around the area, and in it Serrurier, Boulanger, and Concorde were trapped.

An ambulance had been procured for the men whom Arnaud had shot. The bodyguard died on the way to the hospital; Colin lingered but, despite several transfusions of

the good German blood that he had so admired, he died before morning.

Germany had been struck in a vital spot by this murder. Von Falkenhausen redoubled his previous measures and ordered that an example be made of the assassins. This time the proceedings of their trial would be made public so that the Belgian people would realize what would happen to anyone else who dared to defy the power of the Germans. A formal trial was soon held for Concorde, Boulanger, and Serrurier; the indictments were in the names of Arnaud Fraiteur, André Bertulot, and Maurice Rasquin.

Bertulot, who was twenty-three years old, was the son of a baker and worked with his father; his alias had been derived from this fact. Rasquin, who was thirty-seven, was a locksmith and, similarly, owed his Brigade name to his trade.

The trial began on May 5. *The New Journal* and *Cassandra*, as well as other papers, had been authorized to send reporters to describe the proceedings and the reaction of the audience. But despite the Germans' original intention of holding a fully public trial, they found themselves compelled soon to bar all spectators and most of the reporters.

On May 7 a German announcer gave a long account of the trial over the Brussels radio, and thus the world was able to learn something of what had happened at the private trial. It lasted two days. By turns the presiding judge and the German prosecutor questioned the three defendants, who were accused, besides the murder of Colin, of several other attempts on the lives of Germans and their tools.

Boulanger and Serrurier, the two who had not dared to shoot, testified that they had acted on orders of a secret organization. They added that they had done so only for money, because they were hungry, and they had received

The prosecutor attempted to learn the names of their superiors—an effort that had failed at the preliminary hearings. All that the two men could say was that they had been paid by men whom they knew only as Luc and Xavier. The judge took over, trying to get through this anonymity. But Boulanger and Serrurier had told all that they knew.

The prosecutor tried to identify these two names first with a Catholic group and then with the Communists. But Arnaud destroyed both hypotheses when he was questioned. He was not a Catholic, though he was not an atheist; his scholastic record supported this assertion. Aware that the Germans wanted some excuse to seize on the explanation that the assassination had been merely a Communist plot, he made it clear that he had joined the underground movement only after he had assured himself that it was not Communist. But he could give no more information than the others as to the identity of Luc and Xavier.

Arnaud was asked to explain the motives for his act. Serrurier and Boulanger seemed repentant—at least that was the version of the German radio. But Arnaud shouldered the entire responsibility. He explained that he had been detailed only to watch, not to shoot; but, seeing that his colleagues had failed in their duty, he had understood that, when justice lags, a strong arm must strike.

On the second day of the trial the prosecutor had delivered an extremely harsh summation and demanded a judgment that would show Germany's solicitude for her servants. He urged the court to condemn each of the three accused to be hanged by the neck until dead.

Arnaud, standing erect, heard the whole summation with a courage that compelled even the traitor journalist, Jules van Erck, to admire him, for he wrote:

There was not the slightest movement or sign of emotion on the face of Arnaud Fraiteur. He was completely indifferent, buoyed up by God knows what serenity of heart.

The court retired to deliberate; it returned in a few minutes. The presiding judge ordered that the public be admitted to the room, and the soldiers opened the doors to a few curiosity seekers who waited outside.

The presiding judge rose and, after a long legal discourse in German, he announced that the three accused had been found guilty of the murder of the journalist Paul Colin and of other attempts to murder, and that they were condemned to be hanged. After the customary formalities he advised the prisoners, through an interpreter, that the judgment would be binding only after it had been approved by the military governor; the accused had three days in which to file an appeal.

Arnaud, whose control remained unbroken, asked that the procedure for appeal be explained to him. Then he sat down. The next day the appeal was filed and refused.

## XXI

**T**HE WHITE BRIGADE was resurgent in Liège. Despite the diligence of the Gestapo under Dumke, Germans had been killed by a bomb tossed into a building in the Rue Snapeux; the Tallet workshops had been destroyed in a fire caused by flaming torches, consisting of lighted alcohol-soaked spills of cloth, tossed in through the windows. The night that a German propaganda film was to be shown other brigadiers had cut the power wires. Thus far only one man had been arrested: Martin Gryselaer of Grivegnée, a printer.

Dumke had worked hard to track down the rest, but thus far his efforts had been wasted. He must have felt entitled to a little relaxation when he strolled one evening into a café frequented by the German officers. Dumke spent some time

in talk with the others and then stretched out in a chair beside a table near the sidewalk, where he could watch the rare passers-by. There had been so many curfew orders, closings of public places, and confiscations of bicycles that few people were out as late as nine o'clock.

Among those rare pedestrians were three men and a woman who stopped outside the café where Dumke was sitting. A mild discussion arose among them, as if they were debating where to spend their evening. One of them seemed to be carrying a thermos bottle.

As Dumke stretched his legs a little more luxuriously and took a cigarette from the package beside him on the table he saw one of the men make a gesture in the direction of the café. A second later the four had dissolved into the night. His suspicions aroused, Dumke straightened and rose—and crumpled in the midst of a frightful explosion.

The bomb tossed by the stranger had fallen almost between Dumke's feet. So heavily was it charged that the whole forward part of the café was in ruins; frightened drinkers fled from the rear among the wreckage of chairs and tables while others crouched near the bar and a few women screamed.

Recovering from the initial shock, a lieutenant of the Geheime Feldpolizei rushed out to the street with a colleague, revolver in hand. The sight of what was left of Dumke only whipped up their rage. Outside, a few people who had heard the explosion stood immobile; the two Germans immediately placed them under arrest. The noise had sufficed to give the alarm; already police cars were screaming through the darkness and foot patrols were running toward the scene.

Apparently the assassins had fled into a cross street. The two G.F.P. men, with some police in civilian clothes, ran into the street, but they were too late. They were told that some people had been seen furiously bicycling across another

intersection and turning toward the Boulevard de la Sauvenière. A cordon was thrown around the whole area and everyone found within it was summarily seized.

The Red Cross ambulance doctors sent to the café had little curative work to do. Dumke must have been killed at once, and he was horribly mutilated. One of his arms was found several yards away, and blood and brain spattered the floor around him.

Though the Germans questioned thousands of persons and tortured them endlessly, they could learn nothing. No one had seen the act itself or its perpetrators, save to establish that they had been three men and a woman. Where they were and whether they were still together was unknown; the G.F.P., the Gestapo, and the Kriminalpolizei questioned and raged and beat in vain.

When the next day's papers related the incident they published the news of the punishment imposed on the city. The governor of the province had ordered the people of Liège to pay a fine of 2,000,000 francs; all public places were to close daily at 7:30 P.M., and five hundred bicycles and five hundred radio receivers were to be surrendered immediately.

But this was only the beginning. Major General Keim sent his patrols out on a fearful manhunt—in reality a woman-hunt. Fifty Jewesses in Liège were to be taken without delay, and alive. The police descended in packs on the quarter where they had stabled the Jews like unwanted animals. There they lived without food, without medical care, with nothing but the arm band of the Star of David.

Von Mallincroth himself took personal charge of the roundup. He had a complete roll of the Jewish population and, list in hand, he would present himself at one house after another, and after a look at the papers that he carried he would call for the woman of the house, provided that she was not too old. One after another was taken, from her sick-

bed, from the child whom she was nursing, from the parents who clung to her.

By noon the fifty women had been selected and delivered to the freight yards. There on the cattle-loading platforms they stood under the guard of soldiers with bayoneted rifles. Like animals on the way to the slaughterhouse, they could only moan or be silent altogether. A sergeant checked them off against his lists.

Then they were separated into two groups: the appetizing and the homely. The latter were taken to a boxcar for transport eastward as slave labor, but the others were led singly into another car where a makeshift laboratory had been set up. Here they were quickly examined for symptoms of venereal disease, and those who passed the test—there were none who did not—were brought back to the platform, where von Mallincroth was waiting. When they were all together he called harshly for silence—though none dared to speak—and gave them their orders:

"Bitches!

"Your race and yourselves are responsible for all the hardships that the chosen Aryan race has endured. One of your kind killed Dumke; his loss will be amply avenged. You are about to enter a train that will take you to the Russian front. In war there is neither pity nor cowardice. You will serve the German war machine as do its horses and its dogs. We have no intention of being kind to you. But we may temper our anger in proportion to the services that you give.

"You are a privileged group. Your recent companions are far more to be pitied; they will work the rest of their lives in the salt mines. They have seen the sun for the last time.

"But the needs of nature have chosen you for a finer task. You are being sent to the army brothels, where you will have the undeserved pleasure of serving the Fuehrer by making love to the heroes who are destroying Bolshevism.

"I know you are passionate bitches, but I warn you to curb your evil minds. Yours is a far easier task than that of your Aryan

superiors who are dying to save the world from Bolshevism. You should be happy to give yourselves to the business of gratifying the desires of our heroes. The Fuehrer's generosity has made you the most honorable of your race. It is up to you to be good army whores."

Even this was not all. General Keim ordered the arrest of a hundred hostages. These were chosen among men who had long been suspected of questionable activities. If the killers of Dumke were not found within three days, fifty of these hostages were to be executed without trial; if another week elapsed without the discovery of the murderers, the rest would be similarly dealt with.

Among the hostages were three brave men: Camille Hans, a Communist mechanic of Liège; Henri Rasquinet, a former leader of a Communist cell, and Emile Renard, a shoemaker. Hans had a wife and three children.

The repressive measures taken by the Germans seemed only to aggravate the temper of the people. While new precautions rendered acts of violence more difficult, symbolic deeds, no less courageous, increased. At Dinant, for instance, someone climbed to the peak of Bayard's Rock and planted there a huge Belgian flag. The astonished Germans, who themselves dared not attempt the climb, spent a whole morning disposing of the flag with machine-gun fire. In Brussels, at the Théâtre des Galeries, a mediocre revue achieved a huge success because its finale consisted of a ballet in which the curtain fell on a gigantic V. All along the Meuse walls broke out in a rash of V's that reappeared however often they were washed, burned, or scraped off.

On the third day set by Keim for the delivery of Dumke's killers if the hostages were to be spared, a woman knocked at the door of an office in the Kommandatur in Liège. A sergeant appeared and asked gruffly what she wanted; she replied that she had something to tell von Mallincroth. The sergeant replied curtly that the officer could not see her. Un-



ruffled, the woman replied that she wanted to discuss the Dumke killing. The sergeant retired a moment, then returned to take her to von Mallincroth's office.

The German wasted no time. "What do you know about the Dumke affair?" he demanded.

"The name of the killer," she answered calmly.

"What is it?" von Mallincroth barked.

"I will tell you," the woman said, "when I can be certain that the hostages will be released."

"I promise you that it will be done," he said impatiently. "Now tell me the man's name." He noticed that the woman was almost transparently thin; he invited her to sit.

"I'm sorry," she said patiently; "I must actually see the order of release before I will speak."

Von Mallincroth tapped his desk nervously. "Very well, but I reserve the right not to release those who may be held on other charges."

The woman nodded. Von Mallincroth wrote hurriedly on a pad on his desk and passed the paper to his visitor. She read it and nodded again. The German summoned his orderly and instructed him to take the paper to the warder of the prison where the hostages were held.

"There you are, madame." The officer smiled. "The German army is eternally grateful to you and shows its gratitude for your high understanding of your obligations to society. Now tell me who killed Dumke!"

The woman's face did not change as she murmured: "I."

Von Mallincroth leaped from his chair. "You?" he shouted angrily. "Do you take me for a fool? I'll countermand the order, and I'll get the truth out of you."

"Do not excite yourself, sir," the woman replied, still outwardly unchanged. "You have the truth. I have been in prison before, and no one has ever been able to get more than the truth out of me."

Von Mallincroth sat down again and filled a pipe that he

did not light. He studied the woman carefully before he spoke.

"I hope that you are aware that I have gone far beyond the bounds of generosity in this matter," he said. "Will you swear that you killed *Hauptscharführer Dumke*?"

"Yes."

"Be good enough to tell me how it was done."

"Sometime after nine that night," she said, "I threw a bomb into the café where Dumke was——"

"Did you have any accomplices?"

"No."

Von Mallincroth grew red with anger again. "This is ridiculous!" he shouted.

"Please," the woman urged him with dignity. "I repeat: I had no accomplices."

"But you were not alone?"

"No. I was with three people I didn't know."

"I warn you, madame. . . . What do you mean?"

"In the Place Saint-Lambert," the woman recounted with composure, "I met three young men who had lost their way. I went with them to put them on their road and we stopped a moment in front of the café. When I threw the bomb they ran away."

Von Mallincroth tapped his cold pipe against his desk. "And how did you get away?"

"I ran."

The woman was remanded at once to a cell. For a week she was questioned, browbeaten, and occasionally struck. But she never altered her story by a word. In the meantime, she learned through the devious communications from one cell to another that all the hostages except Hans, Renard, and Rasquinet had been released. They were detained on a charge of having committed sabotage on railway lines and electric powerhouses.

At the end of the week of questioning she was brought be-

fore a court-martial. Throughout the three days of her trial the judges and the prosecutor were unable to make her change her self-inculpation. On the third day the death sentence was imposed.

Two nights later she was informed that she was to be executed at dawn. The prisoner wrote the traditional two letters of farewell and drank the proffered rum. Shortly after 10 P.M. a chaplain visited her.

"Are you a patriot, Father?" she asked him.

"My child, I am a subject of heaven. But I love Belgium too. . . . The other day I was present at the executions of three men who died like heroes. Two of them were Communists, but there is no party distinction at a time like that. I don't know whether they were believers, but they were good men. One of them left a wife and three children."

"What was his name?" the woman asked with some tension in her voice.

"Camille Hans. You must try to be as brave as he, my child."

The woman's face had grown suddenly whiter than its usual pallor. "What do you mean, Father?" she asked unsteadily.

"I still have the last letter that Hans wrote for his family," the priest replied softly. "Here, read it—maybe it will give you the strength that you will need."

She opened the envelope that he handed her and took out two closely written sheets that read:

#### MY LITTLE DARLING:

I have just learned that I will be shot tomorrow morning at six; you might say it was a shock, but don't worry; nobody could see that. I was sentenced to die twice, but I've died a dozen times in the past two weeks.

I'm sorry now that I wasn't a better husband and father to you and the kids. But I know they'll never want for anything as long as they have you. I wanted so much to kiss you all once more, but

they wouldn't let me because they said it would be too hard for all of us.

My suffering will soon be over, dearest. But don't you let yourself be too hard hit. Just say to yourself that it had to be, and it's better to die this way than be a coward—I think you feel that way, anyhow. I know that if it had been the other way you'd be ashamed of me.

I know you and the family and our friends will remember me kindly. Please tell Suzanne and Mélie and the people at Bleut and Puits-en-Sock. Tell them I've often thought of them lately, especially Suzanne's mother, poor old lady. But it's no use crying.

Let's hope it won't be too bad on you. If you don't mind and you can spare the money, buy a little plot for me where you can go later if you want. Anywhere you like; it doesn't matter to me.

Have my bike fixed for Albert; it's at Mélie's house in Bressoux. You can sell the motorcycle to pay for it. Raise the children to be as brave as you, as honest and wise; that's all they'll need.

In Cell 38 of Saint-Léonard Prison there's a statue of Our Lady of Perpetual Help. Ask them for it, and a little book that the chaplain gave me; there's something written in it for you.

Don't be too upset when you get this letter. Remember I'll be out of all this suffering—and I had to suffer to learn how much I loved you. All our life together has gone through my mind, from Marseilles to today—and I'm sorry I didn't do more to make you happy.

Be brave, my little darling, and don't forget me too soon, but remember you have a job to do: raise our kids.

For the last time I kiss this paper, since I can't kiss you. I'll be thinking of the four of you.

CAMILLE

The condemned woman handed back the letter with a firm hand. Her eyes were burning as she whispered: "I have something to tell you, Father." He took her hand and she went on: "But only under the secrecy of the confessional." The priest reassured her, and she sat down on her pallet, the priest beside her.

"I didn't kill Dumke!" she said in a dry voice.

The priest was silent for a moment. "Then why did you give yourself up?" he asked gently.

"To save the hostages."

"I can understand that, but what was the reason for such a sacrifice?"

"The Germans might as well have sentenced me to death long ago," she said, her voice a little higher. "I'm dying of tuberculosis. And they starved my daughter to death!"

The chaplain bowed his head.

The next day the woman who had put herself into the hands of the Germans was shot in the routine fashion. She was buried in an unmarked grave.

But Jean Buchet never knew the names of those who had laid her away. Always he was sure in his heart that one day he would return to a liberated country where his wife awaited him. It must have been his last conscious thought when he was shot down in a night raid over Belgium.

Freeman will never know what happened to either of the Buchets. A few weeks after his arrival in England he was dropped into northern France by parachute with the dangerous task of making his way into Belgium, where Chaudron had been arrested.

Following the Meuse Valley, Freeman was arrested at Dinant. The Germans, who thought that they had picked up a fugitive trying to get to England, tortured him mercilessly in an effort to learn the secret of his route and his helpers. In the end Freeman broke. From the shadow of the underground he passed into the deeper night of madness.

## AFTERWORD

THIS is the end of this book, but the Belgian underground continues to gain in power. Every day trains are blown up, Germans are killed, mines are made useless; every morning a clandestine paper appears at a door, a secret emissary reaches London, that meeting place between the guerrillas of the night and the soldiers of the day.

The underground—this English word has become part of the vocabulary of every occupied country; it is a part of their spirits. It sums up a people's whole will to survive; it is the indicator of its unimpaired hatred for the tyrant. I may say even that such a nation's value as a democracy may be measured by its underground movement.

It was in Belgium that German barbarism brought the first secret organizations into being in 1914; it was in that northern delta that they grew and from them that, in later days, other oppressed peoples learned what tasks were imposed on them by honor. Belgium is ready for Allied invasion because the underground is ready. Let the word be given tomorrow: the army of darkness will be prepared, at the disposition of the Allies to strike at the enemy's nerve centers.

It is impossible to underestimate the increasing value of this essentially democratic element in the fight against savagery. In Belgium the White Brigade—created to counter the Black Brigade of the Germans—and the underground press have been the great recorders of hope and hate. Together they have co-ordinated the nation's forces; together they give the orders. In hiding they control the resistance that has emerged from secrecy to public manifestation.

Since I described the connection between the underground

and the action of the Court of Cassation and the Bar Association, the strength of the White Brigade has imparted its enthusiasm to all the established authorities. The development of systematic opposition has been abundantly demonstrated. Only recently *News from Belgium* announced that the members of the Belgian Parliament had made a public protest against German injustice and had fallen under the German ban. The universities have done no less; their rectors and professors have been seized.

Just as there is a junction between Allied quarters in London and the White Brigade, so there exists between the Brigade and popular manifestations an equalizing relation. The underground has given many heroes to the work of deliverance; it will provide more whose names, filling tomorrow's history books, will give it eternal life. Its dead are the heroes of all nations.

The White Brigade has suffered losses in a good cause. It is probable that from its surviving ranks will come the leaders of tomorrow. Today they are unknown, unthought of, but their effective action is no secret. I am sure that men who have been able to keep a people's soul alive in darkness will be no less worthy to lead it through the daylight.

For us of Belgium these agonies still bring one blessing. The underground has firmly united the Fleming and the Walloon; it has taught them the necessity of living together in every sense. Those peoples who would not learn this lesson have fallen into the abysses of history.

Belgium gave, in 1940 as in 1914, definite proof of her opposition to a neighbor that must be forever bound, if not exterminated, unless catastrophe is to be piled on catastrophe. In this endeavor the world may rely on the wholehearted co-operation of Belgium, which has suffered and endured, which again, after a quarter-century, has earned the praise that Henri Bergson gave her when he wrote:

I have said and taught for many years that history was a school of immorality. I will not say it again, after the example that Belgium has just given to the world. One such action redeems the basest villainies of humanity. It gives us greater pride that we are men!

The White Brigade has given us greater pride that we are Belgians!

ROBERT GOFFIN

August 31, 1943

















